SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1

Homer begins by asking the Muse to help him sing the story of the rage of Achilles. The outcome of Achilles' anger is the will of Zeus, but it also killed a huge number of Achaean soldiers. The story opens in the ninth year of war between Troy and the Achaeans, when a plague has swept over the Achaean army. A priest of Apollo named Chryses comes to the Achaeans to ransom back his daughter, whom the Achaeans had captured and gave to the Achaean chief Agamemnon as a spoil of war. All the Achaeans advise Agamemnon to give up the girl, but Agamemnon flatly refuses.

Homer's address to the Muse begins the idea that the Iliad is a poem inspired by the gods, an epic undertaking that will retrace a myth already well known to Homer's ancient Greek audience. When Agamemnon's refuses to give up Chryses' daughter, Apollo provides an early example of divine intervention, setting an example of how the gods can quickly change the fortunes of men.

Chryses departs, but prays to Apollo to send down arrows of plague onto the Achaeans. Apollo hears his prayer, and the Achaeans begin to die from disease. Ten days later Achilles calls a meeting of the troops. He declares that unless Apollo is appeased they will have to abandon the war against Troy. The seer Calchas says that he can explain Apollo's wrath, but only if Achilles promises to protect him after he explains. Achilles agrees readily, and Calchas tells them that Chryse's daughter must be returned and that a sacrifice must be made to Apollo.

Calchas' interpretation of Apollo's plague shows one way that the gods interact with mortals in the poem, giving them signs without making their intentions fully known. Apollo has the power to fate many men to death. Calchas' plea for Achilles to protect him foreshadows the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles.

Agamemnon protests, saying he prefers the girl to his wife, but gives in for the good of all. However, he insists that he must be repaid for his loss, or else he will be dishonored. Achilles tells him that all the treasure has already been divided, and that they will repay him later. Agamemnon refuses, saying that he will take the prize of any captain he pleases, including Achilles. Achilles is outraged, criticizes Agamemnon's leadership, and threatens to sail home.

The dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles is primarily a question of honor. Because Agamemnon is the most powerful king, he believes that he is entitled to the largest share of the war's spoils. Though Achilles's kingdom is less powerful, he is known to be the strongest fighter, giving his words in meeting extra weight.

Agamemnon tells him that he doesn't care if Achilles leaves, and that he will take Achilles' own spoil of war, the girl Briseis, by force. Achilles captured Briseis himself and cares deeply for the girl. Achilles is seized by rage and thinks of killing Agamemnon on the spot, but the goddess Athena appears at his side and checks his anger, promising him a reward for his restraint. Instead, Achilles insults Agamemnon and declares that he will no longer fight for him. The elder captain Nestor tries to mediate the dispute, asking Agamemnon and Achilles to back down, but neither listens to him. Achilles storms off to his camp and Agamemnon organizes the sacrifice to Apollo.

Achilles considers Agamemnon's threat to be deeply dishonorable, as Briseis was captured through Achilles' skill in battle. In addition, Achilles seems to have a strong emotional attachment to Briseis. Athena's appearance is the first time we see a god speak directly to a mortal. Her action curbs Achilles' rage, calling into question Achilles' free will in the moment.

Agamemnon calls two heralds and tells them to go to Achilles' camp and take away Briseis. When they arrive, Achilles welcomes them and lets the heralds take Briseis away without a fight. He criticizes Agamemnon again and tells the heralds that the day will come when they will need his help. The heralds escort Briseis back to Agamemnon's camp.

Although Achilles is capable of resisting Agamemnon's heralds, he takes the moral high ground, telling the heralds that they themselves are not to blame. We know Achilles' prediction will come to pass, emphasizing the fixed nature of his fate.

Weeping, Achilles prays to his mother Thetis, a sea goddess, to help him get revenge on Agamemnon. He says that because he knows his life will be short, he should at least have his honor. Thetis appears at his side, sensing his grief. Achilles explains the situation and asks his mother to plead with Zeus to take action. He notes that Zeus owes Thetis a favor, as Thetis once helped him escape a revolt of the other gods. Thetis laments Achilles' fate, doomed to both heartbreak and a short life. She agrees to go see Zeus when he returns to Olympus in twelve days, and instructs Achilles to keep clear of the fighting.

By invoking his mother Thetis, Achilles sets his destiny into motion. Thetis loves her son, and knows that if she honors Achilles' request, it will lead to his early death. However, by the same token, the fact that Achilles' life is fated to be short means that his mother is more determined to give him glory. She knows Zeus, the highest god, will be able to help her.

Meanwhile, the captain Odysseus sails to the island of Chryses, returns the priest's daughter, and conducts Agamemnon's sacrifice to Apollo. The men feast and then sail back to the Achaean camp.

Odysseus' sacrifice is necessary to appease Apollo and save the Achaean armies. The feast gives a sense of daily life and the routines used for sacrifices.

After twelve days, Zeus returns to Olympus. Thetis goes to see him and kneels before him, asking him to honor her son by granting the Trojans victory while Achilles remains out of the battle. Zeus is angered, and says that helping the Trojans would force him into a fight with his wife Hera, who supports the Achaeans. However, he agrees, and bows his head as a sign of promise. Thetis departs, and Zeus rejoins the other gods in assembly.

Zeus' promise is described as something powerful that cannot be taken back: Achilles' honor will be upheld. However, Zeus also indicates that Hera will fight against his promise, a sign of both the unsure nature of fate and the humanlike passions of the gods.

Although Zeus attempted to make his promise to Thetis in secret, Hera has seen everything. She taunts Zeus for trying to make secret plans, and tells him that she has seen him making a promise to Thetis. Zeus tells her not to meddle in his plans, and that there is nothing she can do to stop him from doing as he pleases. Hera is silenced by his fierce words.

For the first time, the gods are seen together and seem to resemble a family where husband wife bicker. While Hera is able to needle or hinder Zeus, it is clear that he is much stronger than she is, and that his promise will come to pass.

Hephaestus stands up in front of all of the gods, attempting to defuse the quarrel between his parents Zeus and Hera. He tells Hera that Zeus is far too strong, and gives a comic speech about his own fall from Olympus. The last time he tried to defend Hera, Zeus threw him off Olympus; badly injured, mortals nursed him back to health. The gods laugh and feast. As night falls, Zeus sleeps beside his wife Hera.

Hephaestus' speech is an attempt to protect his mother Hera, with whom he is very close. His story is comic to the gods because although Zeus was able to injure him, Hephaestus is still immortal. To them, the idea of being nursed by mortal men is humorous.

BOOK 2

Zeus is kept up at night trying to devise the best plan to honor Achilles by harming the Achaeans. He decides to send a treacherous dream to Agamemnon. The dream, taking the form of the wise Nestor, tells Agamemnon that Troy will fall if he attacks immediately at full strength. Agamemnon awakes, convinced he will finally capture Troy that day, and he calls an assembly of the army and a meeting of the captains.

The dream that Zeus sends to Agamemnon is a false omen, one that Agamemnon takes as a sign of fate. Zeus' will does come to pass, but in the exact opposite way that Agamemnon expects: he is driving his men to certain defeat in order glorify Achilles, who will sit out the battle.

Agamemnon repeats his dream to the assembled captains, and Nestor supports his plan. Before attacking, Agamemnon decides to test the courage of his soldiers, and tells the assembled soldiers that despite the original prophecy of Zeus and that fact that they outnumber the Trojans, the time has come to give up hope of capturing Troy. He tells his troops that it is time to sail home, and to his dismay, the soldiers immediately begin to prepare their ships to depart.

Agamemnon's test intends to show the strength of his soldiers, but instead shows his own mistaken judgment. The common soldiers have no stake in a war against Troy, have suffered great losses, and are eager to return to their families and homes. Agamemnon has put too much faith in his dream.

Hera sees the Achaeans preparing to sail, and sends Athena to stop them from leaving. Athena appears beside Odysseus and tells him to hold the men back from readying the ships. Recognizing a god, Odysseus runs through the encampment, telling his fellow captains to stand fast and disciplining the common soldiers. He manages to marshal the men back into their ranks.

For Hera, it is of the utmost importance that Troy be completely destroyed. She sends Athena to help ensure her plans come to pass. Odysseus appeals the captains' sense of honor to keep them from sailing.

The armies have regrouped, but one common soldier, Thersites, dissents from the ranks. He is described as obscene, ugly, and insubordinate. In front of everyone, he criticizes Agamemnon for hoarding treasure while the soldiers of Achaea are slaughtered, and suggests that the Achaeans should sail home without him. Odysseus steps in, reprimands him, and strikes him over the shoulder with Agamemnon's scepter. The soldiers laugh at Thersites.

Thersites objections are legitimate in many ways: common men are being slaughtered for Agamemnon's pursuit of treasure and honor. At the same time, Thersites is a character out of step with the ancient Greek code of values. His dissent is not honorable, and so he is portrayed as a character of great ugliness.

Odysseus makes a speech to Agamemnon and the troops. He criticizes the men for being so ready to depart from Troy after all of their hard fighting. Next, he recalls the former prophecy of Calchas. Before the fleet reached Troy, the army was offering a sacrifice when they saw a snake crawl up a tree to reach a nest, where it swallowed eight baby sparrows and the mother, and then turned to stone. Calchas interpreted this as a sign that Troy would fall after the ninth year of battle.

Odysseus' speech restores the code of warrior's honor that Thersites has disrupted, indicating that it would be cowardly to return home without achieving victory first. The details in the story of the prophecy give weight to Odysseus' claim that the gods have fated an Achaean victory, encouraging the soldiers to continue fighting.

Odysseus' speech rallies the armies. Nestor then advises the men to honor their oaths by continuing the war. He says that any man who tries to sail home will meet his death, and suggests that the armies organize themselves by tribe, as men fighting with their kin will show their true bravery. Agamemnon agrees and also expresses some regret for quarreling with Achilles, stating that the argument came from Zeus, and that Troy would fall "if the two of us / could ever think as one".

Nestor expresses the idea that family bonds increase the fighting strength of soldiers, as they will be more passionate to fight for those beside them. Agamemnon uses the gods to deflect his responsibility describes his argument with Achilles as something created by the gods, not his own action.

Agamemnon orders the men to eat and then ready themselves for battle. The armies disperse and the men make sacrifices to the gods. Agamemnon sacrifices an ox to Zeus, praying to defeat the Trojans, but Zeus is not yet prepared to grant his request. After eating, Nestor and Agamemnon decide to review the armies before they march out. Athena shines her bright shield on the massing armies, which are described as being like swarms of flies and flocks of animals under tight control.

The preparatory sacrifices indicate how deeply the soldiers believe that the gods determine success or failure on the battlefield. Homer gives multiple descriptions of the massing armies, using rural Greek images to create a complex picture of the immense number of Achaean troops.

Homer invokes the Muses to help him list the enormous number of kings and armies of Achaea, beginning what is known as the Catalogue of Ships. The armies are listed by the region and its chiefs, often with some brief background information about a hero or a city from which the men came. Homer also gives an indication of strength by listing the number of ships that sail for each army. Great Ajax is singled out as the best Achaean soldier after Achilles.

The Catalogue of Ships is considered to be an important link to the oral tradition of Greek poetry, suggesting the political makeup of Bronze Age Greece. The Catalogue also provides information about the size and makeup of the Greek armies in the poem, and lets us know about the homelands of the chiefs and soldiers.

As the armies of Achaea storm out to battle, Zeus sends his messenger Iris to Troy, alerting them to assemble their own armies to meet the Achaeans. Hector breaks up their meeting of chiefs, and a similar catalogue of the Trojans and their foreign allies follows. Hector is singled out as the bravest Trojan.

Zeus immediately alerts the Trojans of the Achaean threat, helping to ensure the Achaean's defeat. The list of the Trojan armies creates a sense of their force's size and a geographic picture of the regions that are allied to the Trojans.

BOOK 3

The two armies approach each other on the battlefield, the Trojans with war cries and the Achaeans in silence. Paris appears at the front of the Trojan force, challenging Achaeans to fight him one on one. Menelaus notices Paris and gleefully plans to fight him for revenge. Paris, seeing Menelaus, retreats back into the Trojan lines. Hector criticizes Paris' cowardice, telling him his talents and looks are useless on the battlefield. Paris agrees that Hector's chastisement is appropriate, but that the gifts given by Aphrodite shouldn't be rejected either.

Paris' blustering attitude becomes a source of comedy when it is shown that he won't back up his swagger. Only acts of valor give a man honor on the battlefield. Hector's criticism displays the divide between wartime and peacetime behaviors, as Paris is indeed charming, but his charm or his success with women is of little use when a warrior like Menelaus challenges him to combat.

Paris tries to save face from Hector's criticism by offering to fight Menelaus in single combat while both armies watch. The winner of the duel will take Helen home along with a vast treasure, ending the war without further bloodshed. Hector happily agrees and strides out in front of the battle to declare a temporary truce. Agamemnon sees Hector come forward and tells his archers to stop firing. Hector asks all of the soldiers to put down their armor while the two champions fight.

The duel between two soldiers is one of the signature modes of fighting in the poem, testing the mettle of two soldiers against one another, free of any outside influence. Hector's decision to step forward into enemy fire to call a truce is a heroic act, and Homer begins to portray Hector as one model of the hero, a man who always defends his kin.

Menelaus responds, calling the duel "limited vengeance" and noting the heavy casualties brought on by his quarrel with Paris over Helen, but ultimately accepts the challenge. He asks for a sacrifice to be made to the gods, with King Priam as witness, to seal the oath that their duel will end the war. The two armies rejoice at the possibility that the war might soon be over.

Paris and Menelaus are the main instigators of the war, as Helen was Menelaus' wife before Paris stole her away. Both sides are receptive to the idea that the two will settle their difference through a duel, as both sides have lost many men fighting for Helen.

The messenger god Iris, taking the form of Hector's sister Laodice, flies to Helen and informs her of the coming duel between Paris and Menelaus: "the man who wins the duel, / you'll be called his wife!". Helen is filled with longing for Menelaus and her homeland.

As Helen is informed of the duel, she is shown as a passive witness to the men who fight for her hand. Helen comes from the same region as Menelaus, and the thought that she might have a homecoming excites her.

Priam and his elder advisors gather in Troy's tall tower. The elders remark how beautiful Helen is, but that it would be better if the Achaeans took her home to end the war. Priam calls Helen to his side. Recognizing her familiarity with the Achaeans from her past, asks her to point out certain men on the field.

Homer addresses the practical question of the war, as the potential destruction of Troy is a great price to pay for a woman, even one as beautiful as Helen. Priam and Helen are shown to have a bond of friendship, humanizing both characters.

Helen names for him Agamemnon, Odysseus, Great Ajax, and Idomeneus, noting the strength and special qualities of each man. Priam's advisor Antenor also tells a story about Odysseus' earlier visit to Troy to bring back Helen, praising his eloquence. Helen cannot find her brothers Castor and Polydeuces among the Achaean fighters, not knowing that they have already died in Lacedaemon, Helen's homeland.

For one of the few times in the poem, we see the Achaeans described from the Trojan perspective. The Achaeans are seen as men of great bravery, noble opponents to the Trojans. Helen's brothers have died without her knowledge, a sign of the way time has passed while Helen has been away from home.

Trojan heralds bring out the sacrifice, and call Priam out to the battlefield to oversee it. Shuddering, Priam reaches the front, where Agamemnon consecrates the sacrifice and swears again that the war will end when the duel is finished. The troops pray for the oath to be kept, but Homer notes that "Zeus would not fulfill their prayers". Priam, unable to bear the sight of his son's potential death, returns to Troy.

A sacrifice to the gods is necessary to ensure the validity of the oaths taken: in a world where gods are active participants, the ability to enforce a broken oath is much more real. Similarly, Homer is able to tell the reader beforehand if an act will come to pass, emphasizing the fated nature of certain actions.

The ground for the duel is measured off, and the two champions cast lots. Paris' lot falls out of the helmet, meaning he will throw his spear first. Paris straps on his burnished armor, Menelaus does the same, and the duel begins. Paris throws his spear, hitting Menelaus' shield but failing to break through. Menelaus prays to Zeus for revenge, and his spear throw almost hits Paris, who barely dodges it. Menelaus then draws his sword, but the blade breaks as he brings it down on Paris' head.

The duel between Paris and Menelaus measures the strength of each man, as performance in battle was one of the foremost ways of measuring a man's worthiness. By contrast, happenstance events like the breaking of a sword are attributed to the acts of gods. Here Zeus does not fulfill Menelaus' prayer.

Menelaus, furious at his weapons' failure, grabs Paris by the crest of his helmet and begins to drag him away to the Achaean lines, choking him by his helmet strap. Before he can complete his conquest, Aphrodite intervenes, snapping the strap of the helmet and transporting him back to his bedroom in Troy.

Aphrodite is, among other things, the personification of love, and the fact that Paris is her favorite, and that she must remove him from the battle to his bedroom, indicates that Paris is soft in battle. Paris' disappearance is the first in the series of gods' interventions to save mortals.

Aphrodite then travels to Helen, and taking the appearance of Helen's beloved seamstress from Lacedaemon, summons her to join Paris in his bedroom. Helen resists, suggesting that Aphrodite has transported her before against her will, and that she will never go back to Paris. Aphrodite becomes furious and threatens to destroy Helen. Helen meekly submits and goes to Paris. In the prince's "sumptuous halls," Helen berates her husband for his cowardice. Paris deflects her harsh words and the two make love. On the battlefield, Menelaus looks for Paris up and down the lines, and the Achaeans cry out that Menelaus is the victor, ending the war by oath.

Aphrodite's actions illustrate the fine distinction between a god as a metaphor for a human emotion and a god as something closer to a person. Aphrodite takes the form of a friend of Helen in order to be more convincing, but is also more than capable of forcing Helen to do her bidding. Much like love itself, Aphrodite's change of mood is impulsive. On the battlefield, Paris' disappearance only contributes to his poor reputation as a soldier. Meanwhile, the war appears *to be over.*

BOOK 4

The gods sit in council on Mt. Olympus, watching events take place in Troy. Zeus begins to taunt Hera, mocking her and Athena for standing by while Aphrodite rescues Paris. He notes that Menelaus is the victor, and that he should now lead Helen home. Hera explodes with anger, saying that she won't let the duel stop her effort to destroy Troy. In turn, Zeus becomes angry, criticizing her relentless desire to raze Troy. He tells Hera that when he wishes to destroy a city "filled with men you love—to please myself", she shouldn't stand in his way. Hera agrees, offering him the Achaean cities of Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae in return for Troy.

The gods treat the war as their playground, and are more than willing to trade barbs—and mortal's lives—with one another. To some extent, the fact that men are mortal is what makes men appealing to the gods of Homer: ultimately, they are expendable. Hera doesn't worry at all about trading the destruction of three whole cities for the destruction of Troy.

Zeus, satisfied with Hera's offer, agrees to ensure Troy's destruction. He orders Athena to fly down to the battlefield in order to provoke the Trojans into breaking the truce. Athena speeds to Troy, where the troops are anxiously wondering what will happen after the duel's incomplete result. Athena, in form of a Trojan soldier, induces the archer Pandarus to shoot an arrow at Menelaus, promising him fame and gifts from Paris.

Zeus, the strongest of the gods, is easily able to bend men to his will, giving him the appearance of being in control of men's fates. For instance, Athena is easily able to coax Pandarus into breaking the truce, furthering Zeus' overall plans for the war.

Pandarus prays to Apollo and shoots at Menelaus, but Athena deflects the arrow, causing it to merely graze its target. Menelaus sees his own blood, but realizes the wound is not serious. Agamemnon also sees the bleeding and curses the Trojans for breaking their oath. Menelaus reassures Agamemnon of his health, and the healer Machaon is summoned to treat the wound. Realizing the oath has been broken, both armies ready themselves for battle again.

In the period of the Trojan War, any wound could be potentially fatal, so every injury is taken seriously. At the same time, injury and death is a natural part of the way of life. A healer like Machaon is extremely valuable for his knowledge of medicine.

Agamemnon goes out on foot among the troops, rousing them to battle. He praises the Cretan Idomeneus and the two Aeantes (Great Ajax and Little Ajax) for their skill and courage. The elder captain Nestor gives advice to his troops, telling them to hold their formation, and Agamemnon compliments Nestor's wisdom. Next, Agamemnon goads Odysseus, accusing him of hanging back in the ranks. Odysseus's anger flares, but Agamemnon reassures him.

The ability to raise the morale of troops is an important ability throughout the poem. Agamemnon's role as king is to organize and marshal his troops, and he will say anything he can to make his men fight more fiercely.

Agamemnon meets Diomedes and similarly prods him for shirking his place in battle. He compares Diomedes to his father Tydeus. Agamemnon tells a story of Tydeus defeating his enemies in feats of strength. Diomedes' co-commander Sthenelus tells Agamemnon that men today are much stronger than the men of their fathers' generation, but Diomedes silences him and remarks that Agamemnon is simply trying to provoke them.

The only way men like Diomedes' father are remembered is through their heroism on the battlefield. Diomedes and Sthenelus measure their own strength against the tales of generations past, and hope to live up to or surpass the deeds of their legendary fathers.

The Achaean army moves forward to battle, and their march is described as being like the surf pounding the shore. The Trojan army is described as a clamor of different languages crying out and clashing. The armies finally collide in battle, and the bloodshed begins in earnest. The Achaean captains Antilochus and Great Ajax kill Trojans in grisly fashion. A comrade of Odysseus is killed by the Trojans, and Odysseus kills a bastard son of Priam in reprisal.

This passage begins the pattern seen throughout the poem of reprisal killings. When Odysseus' comrade is killed, Odysseus is spurred on to avenge his fallen friend. Throughout the poem, compassion for a fallen comrade is one of the greatest sources of strength for soldiers.

Under the Achaean assault, the Trojans are forced back. Apollo watches the battle from above, and cries out for the Trojans to fight back, noting that Achilles is not fighting. However, Athena spurs the Achaean forces onward. Homer finishes the book with descriptions of two deaths: Diores is struck by a rock thrown by Pirous and speared, and Pirous is speared as he springs away from his kill. Many Achaeans and Trojans lie dead in the dust.

The end of the book can be seen as a miniature picture of the killing between Trojans: ultimately, both sides end dead on the ground, casualties of a war in which they are only minor players. Meanwhile, the gods play with the fate of the armies.

BOOK 5

Athena grants Diomedes strength in battle "so the fighter would shine forth…and win himself great glory." Diomedes dismounts his chariot and begins killing Trojans. Athena further assists Diomedes by luring Ares away from the battlefield. Multiple Achaean captains, including Agamemnon, Idomeneus, and Menelaus, kill their Trojan counterparts.

Book 5 begins a passage of extended individual heroism for Diomedes, something that the Greeks called an aristeia. *The passages is designed to commemorate Diomedes' bravery and glory as a hero. Naturally, a goddess, Athena, assists him in attaining this glory.*

Diomedes continues his assault on the Trojans, acting like force of nature. The Trojans begin to panic. Pandarus shoots an arrow at Diomedes and hits him in the shoulder. He pulls back for a moment and prays to Athena, who infuses him with the strength of his father to continue fighting. The goddess also gives Diomedes the power to see the gods on the battlefield. She instructs him to keep clear of the other gods, except for one: if he sees Aphrodite, he should attack her with his spear.

Homer uses descriptions of nature to describe the strength of Diomedes as deeply powerful and nearly elemental. Similarly, the fact that Diomedes is wounded but keeps fighting only serves to bolster his glory on the battlefield. The powers Athena gives to Diomedes also set up a potential later encounter with a god in combat.

Diomedes charges back into battle, described as a lion attacking a flock of sheep. He kills several Trojans, including two sons of Priam. Seeing Diomedes' fury, the Trojan hero Aeneas seeks out the archer Pandarus, who tells Aeneas that he already has shot Diomedes, and that Diomedes must have a god beside him. Aeneas asks Pandarus to board his chariot, and two set out in pursuit of Diomedes.

For the ancient Greeks, lions would not be an exotic metaphor, as they still existed in Greece and Anatolia. Homer uses the metaphor to describe Diomedes as an overpowering force. Aeneas and Pandarus become the foil to Diomedes' rampage, attempting to stop him.

Diomedes' co-captain Sthenelus notices the approach of Aeneas and Pandarus. He advises Diomedes to give ground to them, but Diomedes rejects his advice, saying that Athena will determine the victor. Diomedes throws his spear and kills Pandarus. Aeneas springs down from the chariot to protect Pandarus' corpse. In a feat of strength, Diomedes lifts a boulder and throws it at Aeneas, hitting him in the socket of his hip. Aeneas passes out, but his mother Aphrodite appears before him and protects his body from harm.

Sthenelus' advice lets the reader know what a "normal" soldier would do, but Diomedes is empowered by the gods. The boulder that Diomedes lifts is another example of a nearly superhuman feat, as Diomedes is temporarily almost more than a man. Aeneas, a character with an immortal mother, is Diomedes' target, increasing the sense of glory.

Aphrodite attempts to lift Aeneas away from the fighting, but Diomedes is able to see her. Diomedes charges at Aphrodite and gouges her wrist with his spear. Aphrodite screams and drops Aeneas. Iris leads Aphrodite away from the battlefield, and she flies to Olympus using Ares' team of horses. Aphrodite's mother Dione comforts her, telling her stories of other gods wounded by men and noting that "the man who fights the gods does not live long". She heals Aphrodite's wound. Hera and Athena mock Aphrodite, taunting her delicacy.

Diomedes' attack on Aphrodite, a goddess, emphasizes his heroic stature in battle. At the same time, Aphrodite, as the goddess of love, has no real place on the battlefield. Homer provides Dione's story as a counterpoint to Diomedes' rampage, indicating that there should still be deference to the gods, who are much stronger than mortal men, and that even mortal men with a god upholding them are doomed to fall from their heights of glory.

Back on the battlefield, Apollo protects Aeneas' body. Diomedes, unafraid, charges at Apollo, intending to strip Aeneas' armor from his body. He charges three times, but each time Apollo rebuffs him. On Diomedes' fourth charge, Apollo commands Diomedes to stand clear, declaring that they "are not the same breed." Diomedes gives ground, and Apollo lifts Aeneas far from the battlefield, taking him to the sacred mountain of Pergamus, where Apollo's relations Artemis and Leto heal Aeneas' wounds.

Diomedes is able to wound Aphrodite, but his newfound glory only extends so far. Apollo is far too strong for his advances. Aeneas' rescue helps emphasize the truly unusual status of men who have immortal parents. The gods will heal Aeneas' wounds and send him back into battle.

Apollo creates a "phantom" that resembles Aeneas' body for the battlefield. Achaeans and Trojans swarm around the false body, battling for Aeneas' armor. Apollo calls the war god Ares to his side, asking him to remove Diomedes from combat. Ares drives the Trojans forward, lending them his fighting spirit. The Trojan ally Sarpedon taunts Hector, and Hector drives his men into battle with new force. Aeneas reappears on the battlefield, and the Trojans, heartened to see him uninjured, plunge forward.

Apollo's creation of Aeneas' "phantom" suggests again the metaphorical nature of the gods. On one hand, the phantom makes it seem like Aeneas is really still there, and that his removal from battle by Apollo is actually the metaphor. On the other hand, the gods are a very real presence throughout the story and act in ways that are more than metaphorical.

The Achaeans stand up to the Trojan attack, led by Diomedes, Odysseus, and the Aeantes (the plural of Ajax). The two sides trade kills: Agamemnon kills a comrade of Aeneas, and Aeneas kills two Achaean captains. Next, Nestor's son Antilochus and Menelaus drive Aeneas back. The battle rages back and forth. Tlepolemus, the son of Hercules, trades insults with Sarpedon. Sarpedon kills Tlepolemus but is also injured in the fight.

The back-and-forth nature of the killing keeps the tension of the battle high, as it always seems like the course of battle might be about to change. The fact that Tlepolemus is Hercules' son contributes to the sadness of his death, as the sons of the soldiers are partly the remembrances of their fathers.

Odysseus, seeing the death of Tlepolemus, kills several of Sarpedon's men in response. Sarpedon is Zeus' son and is not fated to be killed by Odysseus. Hector pushes past the injured Sarpedon, looking to drive the Achaeans back to their ships, and the Achaeans slowly give ground.

Odysseus' kills contribute to his glory. Homer clearly indicates that it is not Sarpedon's fate to die at this moment, indicating that Zeus has a great deal of control over the specific events of the battle.

Hera and Athena, seeing the Achaeans pushed back, harness Hera's chariot and put on their armor. They appeal to Zeus to help the Achaeans, and he allows them to do so. They fly to the battlefield, and Hera gives courage to the Achaean forces. Athena goes to Diomedes and reminds him of her protection, criticizing his fear. Diomedes replies that Ares is dominating the battle. Athena gets into Diomedes' chariot and the pair charges Ares. With Athena's help, Diomedes spears Ares, who shrieks and flies away to Olympus.

The gods constantly intervene in the war, and to some extent the tides of the war can be measured by the interventions of the gods. Usually when a god arrives, it marks a change in fortune on the battlefield, as soldiers will be given new courage. With Athena's help, Diomedes' aristeia *reaches its peak as he spears the god of war himself.*

On Olympus, Ares displays his wound to Zeus, complaining of Athena's violence and of Diomedes' attacks on the gods. Zeus replies that he hates Ares most of all the gods, and that his injury is the will of his mother Hera. Zeus remarks that if Ares were not his son, he would banish him from Olympus. Ares' wound is treated and washed. Hera and Athena return to Olympus, having successfully turned back the Trojans.

Despite the fact that the Iliad is all about a war, Ares plays a minor role among the gods of the poem. Partly he is less invested in the outcome, unlike Aphrodite or Hera, but here Zeus also indicates that his regard for Ares is unfavorable. It may be an indication that neither side fights the war for war's sake, but rather for other more important reasons—honor and glory.

BOOK 6

The battle continues between the Achaeans and the Trojans. The Achaeans, including Great Ajax and Diomedes, kill several Trojans. Menelaus almost spares the Trojan Adrestus' life in exchange for ransom, but Agamemnon convinces Menelaus to kill him. The Achaeans push forward.

Menelaus' decision not to spare Adrestus indicates a new intensity in the state of the war. Previously, capturing a soldier for ransom would have been normal, but now the Achaeans are determined to take no prisoners.

Helenus, a seer and a son of Priam, tells Aeneas and Hector to stand fast and to rally the troops. He also tells Hector to return to the city in order to organize a Trojan sacrifice to Athena, "if only she'll pity Troy." Hector obeys, first driving his soldiers forward, then turning back to Troy.

The Trojans realize that certain gods and goddesses, such as Athena, are disposed against them. As the tide of battle turns, the Trojans hope that a meaningful sacrifice might change Athena's opinion of Troy, or at least dispose her toward mercy.

The Trojan ally Glaucus meets Diomedes on the battlefield. Diomedes tells Glaucus that he has never noticed him before, and that he will fight him if he is mortal. Glaucus responds that Diomedes shouldn't ask about his birth, as men are "Like the generations of leaves…as one generation comes to life, another dies away." Glaucus recounts the story of Bellerophon, his heroic ancestor. Diomedes asks that they part as friends, as their grandfathers knew each other from the time of heroes.

Glaucus' statement on the mortality of men emphasizes his own bravery, as he is unafraid to take his place among the dead. The encounter between Glaucus and Diomedes represents almost a kind of chivalry between soldiers. Both men recognize that their ancestors are heroes of the past, causing the two to have a mutual respect.

Hector reaches the gates of Troy and tells the people to "Pray to the gods." He goes to Priam's palace and seeks out his mother Hecuba, who offers him wine. He refuses the offer and tells her to prepare a large sacrifice to Athena to help turn back the Achaeans. Hecuba gives orders to gather women and the materials for the sacrifice. The sacrifice is offered, but Athena refuses to hear the Trojan prayers.

Hector's return to Troy gives the reader a glimpse of life inside the city. Hector receives attention and care from his mother, but he is not in a position to accept it, as he must hurry back to help fend off the Achaean onslaught.

Hector comes across Paris in his chambers, polishing his armor. Hector and Helen berate Paris for shirking the battlefield. Paris claims that he is stricken by grief, but agrees that Hector's criticism is fair. He agrees to arm himself and catch up with Hector as he returns to battle.

Paris and Hector are a study in contrasts: Hector cares deeply about protecting the city and all of its inhabitants, whereas Paris is so consumed by his own grief that he is incapable of being any use.

Hector speeds to his own house, but his wife Andromache is not there. A servant tells him that she has gone to Troy's tower to watch the fighting. Hector runs to the gates, where he meets Andromache and their infant son Astyanax. Andromache weeps for the past loss of her family to the Achaeans, and asks for Hector to stay within Troy's walls, fearing that she will become a widow. Hector tells her he must fight so that all of Troy is not destroyed.

Hector is shown to be a family man, caring deeply for his wife and son. Such family ties are the very things that the Trojans are fighting to preserve. If the Achaeans prevail, then everyone inside Troy's walls will be doomed to slavery and the destruction of their mighty civilization. And yet, at the same time, war forces men from their families. There is honor and glory to be gained in war, but much to be lost as well, particularly for those left behind.

Hector reaches down to cradle his son, but Astyanax is frightened, not recognizing his father in full battle armor. Hector removes his helmet and kisses his son. Hector says a prayer for his son, hoping he will become a strong warrior, and tells Andromache not to mourn him too soon. He tells her that no man escapes his fate, and urges her to go back to her work.

Hector's son represents the promise of a future generation of men who will grow up to take the places of their fathers. Astyanax is frightened by Hector's helmet, a sign of his youth, but also a sign of the thing he might grow up to become if he survives the war.

Hector puts his helmet back on and heads back into battle. The women of Troy begin to mourn Hector, convinced that he will never return from battle with the Achaeans. Paris joins Hector as they run back into battle. Hector scolds Paris, calling him a good soldier who hangs back, and the two head forward into battle.

The Trojan women's lament for Hector seems to predict his death, indicating that his demise is fated. Hector gives a partial compliment to Paris, showing that he has more good qualities than his looks, though it also suggests that Paris' failures as a soldier is not his skill or strength but his courage.

BOOK 7

Hector and Paris sweep back into battle, and each kills an Achaean. Athena notices the Trojan surge and prepares to help the Achaeans, but Apollo sees her coming and intercepts her, asking her to help him end combat for the rest of the day. Athena agrees, and Apollo devises a plan. In the guise of Helenus, Apollo tells Hector to challenge the Achaeans to fight him in single combat. Hector approaches the Achaean lines and issues his challenge to any Achaean strong enough to fight him.

Again, the gods pull the strings on the battlefield, engineering a duel to prevent further bloodshed. Now Hector, the subject of the previous book, will prove his strength against an Achaean champion.

No Achaean is brave enough to accept the challenge until Menelaus stands up on behalf of the Achaeans. Agamemnon checks him, knowing that Menelaus is not strong enough of a fighter to battle Hector. Menelaus yields, and Nestor speaks to the troops, recounting his younger exploits and telling them to stand up for their army's honor. After his speech, nine Achaeans stand up, including Agamemnon, Odysseus, and the Aeantes. The challengers cast lots, and Great Ajax wins.

Hector is considered to be very strong by the Achaeans, as no one immediately rises to fight him. The troops have a sense of who the strongest fighters are, and in the poem there is always a quality of ranking the champions, as each hero portrayed may possibly surpass the previous one.

Ajax prays to Zeus and prepares himself for battle. The duel begins, and Hector's spear throw fails to pierce Ajax' shield. Ajax' spear tears Hector's shield apart, but Hector just manages to dodge the throw. The two then fight with lances, and Ajax knocks Hector over. Apollo pulls Hector back up. Before they can continue the fight with swords, heralds from both sides separate the fighters, telling them that night is coming on.

As the duel progresses, Ajax is portrayed as being slightly stronger than Hector. Often the assistance of a god endows a man with superhuman strength, but here Hector needs Apollo's assistance just to stay standing.

Hector and Ajax agree to end their duel. They exchange gifts of friendship: Hector gives up his sword, and Ajax gives up his war-belt. The two armies return to their camps. The Achaeans sacrifice to Zeus and lay out a banquet, where Ajax receives a choice cut of meat.

Both men have conducted themselves honorably in the duel, and they see fit to exchange gifts as a token of respect. After the battle, the Achaeans pay their respects to the gods.

Nestor speaks to the Achaean captains, lamenting the casualties and asking that the next day be dedicated to burying the dead. He also advises that the Achaeans build fortifications around the ships, including a steep rampart and a ditch lined with stakes. The captains agree to follow his council.

This passage indicates the extreme respect that the Achaeans have for the dead who fall in battle. It is necessary and proper that the deceased be treated correctly, as battle is perhaps the most honorable way to die.

In the gathering of Trojan leaders, Antenor suggests that the time has come to give back Helen and her treasure in order to end the war. Paris refuses to give up Helen, but offers to return to the treasure that he took when he carried her off. Priam suggests that this proposal be taken to the Achaeans, and that the Trojans should also take time to bury their dead.

By suggesting that the Trojans give up Helen, Antenor appeals to the idea that Troy can go back to the way it was before the Achaeans landed. Paris' offer is a last attempt to avoid a war to the death. The Trojans similarly pay great respect to the dead.

A Trojan emissary goes to the Achaean ships and offers Paris' treasure for peace. The Achaeans reject the Trojan offer immediately, but agree to a temporary truce in order to bury the dead. Agamemnon says he would never "grudge their burning." Two Achaean detachments are formed, one to bury the dead and the other to build fortifications.

The offer of peace is scorned by the Achaeans, who have performed successfully over the course of the day. Agamemnon indicates that he would not dream of interfering with the Trojans efforts to honor their dead. Any such interference would itself be seen as disrespectful of all the dead.

On Olympus, Poseidon is angered that the Achaeans are building fortifications without sacrificing to the gods. Zeus calms him, and tells him that he may destroy the fortifications as soon as the war is ended. The Achaeans finish the fortifications, take their meal, and fall asleep.

Homer shows that the gods demand to be respected at all times, in all things. Zues' prediction is a statement of the decay of mortal works: the sea will easily wash away everything the Achaeans have built after they leave. The only thing remaining to indicate that a great war was fought at all is the story itself—the Iliad.

BOOK 8

The next day, Zeus summons the gods to assembly, forbidding them to interfere any further in the war. He tells the gods that he is stronger than the rest of them put together, and that he will punish anyone who disobeys. With his pronouncement made, Zeus flies to Mount Ida, near Troy, to conduct the affairs of the war by himself.

By forbidding the gods from participating, Zeus seeks to gain greater control over the fate of the war. He is not all-powerful, as gods can disobey him, but his ban on intervention allows him to direct events as he pleases.

The Achaeans and Trojans enter into battle once more. Zeus, holding a golden scale, tips the balance of the war in favor of the Trojans. Zeus sends thunder and lightning against the Achaeans, who are immediately seized with terror. Even the greatest Achaean heroes begin to flee the Trojans.

Zeus' scale is a direct symbol of his ability to influence the outcome of the war. When he can influence the war so directly, his will is nearly identical with fate itself.

In battle, Hector bears down on the elderly Nestor. Nestor is barely saved by Diomedes, who takes him into his chariot. Diomedes kills Hector's chariot driver, but a thunderbolt from Zeus turns them back toward the ships. Diomedes, taunted by Hector, almost turns to face him, but the signs from Zeus are too strong. Hector encourages his men to fight onward to the Achaean fortifications.

Even though Zeus causes the tide to turn against the Achaeans, the Achaeans can still read Zeus' omens, such as his thunderbolts. With this guidance, they are able to gain a limited amount of understanding about how to act in the situation.

On Olympus, Hera shakes with anger in her desire to help the Achaeans, but Poseidon checks her rage. On the battlefield, the Achaeans are pushed back to their fortifications. Hera sends inspiration to Agamemnon, who encourages his troops to stand fast. Agamemnon prays to Zeus to save the Achaean army, and Zeus sends a sign of encouragement to Agamemnon in the form of an **eagle**. The eagle gives the Achaean army hope, and they begin to fight back.

Now that the gods other than Zeus cannot interfere directly on the battlefield, their influence is limited. Although Zeus has temporarily turned the tide of war against the Achaeans, he is still willing to send them a sign of hope, as they are ultimately destined to prevail in his larger scheme.

Great Ajax and the archer Teucer, his half brother, work together as a team, with Teucer hiding behind Ajax' massive shield. Teucer kills several Trojans. Agamemnon praises Teucer's bravery. Teucer aims for Hector, but is only able to kill the men around him. Hector, seeing the threat, injures Teucer with a rock, ending his streak of kills. Zeus turns the tide of battle once again in favor of the Trojans.

Great Ajax and Teucer are related by blood, and their bond helps them work as an effective fighting team. Although Zeus has temporarily favored the Achaeans, he is easily able to swing the fortunes of battle back toward the Trojans.

With Hector in command, the Trojans drive the Achaeans back into their fortifications. Hera and Athena take pity on the Achaeans and curse Hector. They decide to assist the Achaeans directly, despite Zeus' warning, and arm themselves for battle. Zeus sees the goddesses preparing for battle, and sends his messenger Iris to order them to relent. Threatened by Zeus, the goddesses give up their plan to join the battle.

This time, Zeus is easily able to see when other gods are attempting to thwart his plans. Hera and Athena have their favorites among the Achaeans, and they are not totally aware of Zeus' plan to aid the Trojans primarily as a means to give glory to Achilles. However, Zeus is much stronger and deals with them effortlessly.

Zeus returns to Olympus and mocks Hera and Athena for their failed efforts. Hera tells Zeus of her pity for the Achaeans, and Zeus replies that she will have her chance to save them the next day, but until then many more Achaeans will die. He says that Hector will not quit the fight until Achilles returns from his absence.

Zeus begins to outline the details of his master plan, displaying his absolute control over the course of events. For the first time, he implies that Hector will be killed by Achilles.

Night comes and the battle ceases until the next day. Hector, encouraged by the Trojan success, decides to make his camp on the battlefield, so as to not let the Achaeans escape in the night. He prays to Zeus that the Achaeans will finally be defeated the next day. The Trojans light many watch fires and wait for the dawn to come.

The Trojans are in firm command of the situation, as it seems possible that the Achaeans might try to sail away under the cover of darkness. Their decision to camp outside of their city is bold, suggesting they are ready to attack immediately the next day.

BOOK 9

The Achaeans, sensing defeat, are panicked and despondent. Agamemnon summons a meeting of the armies and tearfully declares the war a failure, stating that Zeus has "entangled me in madness." He tells the Achaeans that it is time to sail home. Diomedes rises up before the men and criticizes Agamemnon, telling him that he may sail if he wishes, but that he will stay and fight the Trojans. He says that Troy is fated to fall, and the men roar with assent. Nestor agrees with Diomedes, tells the soldiers to take their meal, and calls a meeting of the captains to devise a plan.

Agamemnon slightly diminishes his honor by suggesting that the Achaeans abandon the war. Diomedes' refusal to leave is met with much heartier approval from the troops. Similarly, Agamemnon uses the will of the gods as an excuse for his failures. However, he has no idea of the true nature or extent of Zeus' plan.

At the meeting of captains, Nestor proposes that Agamemnon make peace with Achilles in order to bring him back into battle. Agamemnon agrees with Nestor, stating again that Zeus seized him with madness to make him quarrel with Achilles. Agamemnon sets aside a massive treasure for Achilles, including the return of Briseis and marriage to one of Agamemnon's daughters once the war ends. Odysseus, Great Ajax, and the elderly Phoenix are chosen as the men to offer Agamemnon's peace proposal to Achilles.

As Agamemnon is the most powerful of the Achaean kings, he can offer a very powerful reward, but it is uncertain that Achilles will accept. In addition, Agamemnon claims again that Zeus is responsible for his quarrel with Achilles. The reader already knows the actions of the gods, so Agamemnon's justification seems somewhat flimsy.

Agamemnon's emissaries reach Achilles' camp, where they find Achilles playing the lyre and singing. Achilles' friend Patroclus is at his side, and the two men welcome the embassy. Achilles provides food and drink for the men. Odysseus speaks first, asking for Achilles' help and listing the treasures offered by Agamemnon. Achilles rejects the offer immediately. Claiming that death is the same for everyone, Achilles says that there is no point in battling with the Trojans. He curses Agamemnon and his treasures.

Achilles here is portrayed as a good host and a man of culture (at least in comparison to his comrades). Achilles questions the fundamental reason of fighting the war, at least temporarily rejecting the idea that soldiers can attain greater honor in combat. From Achilles' perspective, all death is the same, so it does not matter how it comes.

Achilles tells the embassy that his mother Thetis told him of two possible fates: either Achilles can die at Troy and win everlasting glory, or he can return to his homeland and live a long but unremarkable life. Remarking that "no wealth is worth my life," he tells the captains to sail home, saying that he will do the same tomorrow morning. He welcomes his old friend Phoenix to remain with him if he'd like to sail home.

Achilles' fate is unusual, insofar as he seems to have two options between which he can choose. His fate is fixed, but there is still room for him to make a decision. Achilles sees clearly that if he accepts Agamemnon's treasure he will die fighting against Troy, and afterward Agamemnon's treasure will be of no use to him.

Phoenix attempts to convince Achilles not to sail home. He recalls Achilles' father Peleus sending Achilles off to battle. Phoenix also tells a story of conflict with his own father, recounting that his exile led him to Phthia, where he helped raise Achilles. Recalling these emotional memories, he urges Achilles to "beat down your mounting fury!" Finally, Phoenix tells an old story of the warrior Meleager, a man who out of anger refused to fight for his city. Eventually he was convinced to fight, but received no treasure for his efforts. Achilles sill rejects the offer, and asks Phoenix to support him instead of doing Agamemnon's errands.

Phoenix appeals to Achilles' emotions, recounting stories of his youth in an attempt to make Achilles forget his pride. However, Phoenix's memories and his moralistic tale of Meleager are ineffective, as the choice that faces Achilles is too stark. If he yields to Agamemnon's embassy, he believes he will seal his fate for a price that is not worth it.

Achilles moves to adjourn the meeting, but Great Ajax speaks his turn. He tells Achilles that his anger has made him too proud, and finally appeals to the respect the other soldiers will have for him if he relents. Achilles is somewhat softened by his speech. He says that he will not sail tomorrow, but he will still refrain from combat until the fighting reaches his own ships. The embassy departs.

Great Ajax' entreaty to Achilles is the most effective of the three speeches. It speaks to the point closest to Achilles' heart, which is the question of glory, a trait that can only be conferred through the opinions of other men. The more other men respect Achilles, the more his honor will grow.

The embassy returns to Agamemnon's camp. The embassy gives Agamemnon the news of Achilles' refusal. The soldiers are dispirited by the news. Diomedes says that Achilles is very proud, and that he will fight when the time comes. He says that Achaeans will be able to fight on without him if they prepare themselves. The meeting ends and the men sleep.

The failure of the embassy reflects Achilles' position as an individual hero within the Achaean army. Diomedes suggests that Achilles will fight simply because it is his nature as a warrior, and that he can't hold back in anger forever.

BOOK 10

As night falls, the Achaeans sleep soundly, except for Agamemnon, who watches the Trojan fires. Restless, he seeks out Nestor to create a new plan for the Achaeans. Menelaus is also unable to sleep and comes across his brother arming himself. Agamemnon tells Menelaus to gather the best Achaean captains while he speaks with Nestor.

Agamemnon and Menelaus are both deeply concerned for the fate of the Achaean expedition. Agamemnon needs victory as the leader of the Achaean forces: if the Trojans defeat him, it will show his weakness. Menelaus is Agamemnon's brother, but the war concerns him directly through Helen, his wife who was stolen by Paris.

Agamemnon goes to Nestor and tells him about his anguish. Nestor tells him to wake other captains, but Menelaus has already done so. Nestor rouses Odysseus and Diomedes. When the captains have gathered, Nestor asks if anyone is willing to infiltrate the Trojan lines to gain some advantage or information. Diomedes immediately volunteers to lead the mission, and suggests that another man accompany him. Many men volunteer to go with him, but Diomedes chooses Odysseus.

The suggestion of the night raid displays a new aspect of the war. Combat between the two sides is not simply men dueling to the death in full armor. Intelligence and tactics are necessary to secure victory over the Trojans. By volunteering, Diomedes further solidifies his status as a great Achaean hero.

Diomedes and Odysseus arm themselves for battle, and Odysseus wears an ancient helmet lined with boar's teeth, passed down for generations. Athena sends the men a lucky bird sign. They pray to Athena and set out into the night to infiltrate the Trojan lines.

Odysseus' helmet is described as having an ancient lineage, just as the soldiers themselves have passed down the art of war to their sons for countless generations.

In the Trojan camp, Hector also plans a night mission to gain information, promising treasure to a volunteer. A soldier named Dolon accepts the challenge, offering to scout the Achaean camp. Dolon heads toward the Achaean ships, but Odysseus sees him coming. Odysseus and Diomedes plan to ambush Dolon in order to prevent his spying.

Hector's decision to send out a scout creates a parallel to the Achaean mission, but with key differences. Dolon is not one of the best-known Trojan fighters, as Odysseus and Ajax are for the Achaeans. The skill of the Achaeans will allow them to gain an advantage.

Dolon passes by the hiding Diomedes and Odysseus, and the pair spring upon him, chasing him down. Dolon asks to be taken alive, and the Achaeans use the opportunity to gather information from him. Dolon tells the two all about the Trojan position, letting them know the best place to attack. Afterward, Diomedes kills Dolon, and the two head toward the Thracian camp that Dolon had suggested.

Dolon capitulates too easily to Diomedes and Odysseus, and his cowardice wins him nothing. He is killed all the same. The cunning of the Achaean heroes allow them to scout out a Trojan position where they hope to find favorable opportunities.

Diomedes and Odysseus come upon the Thracian camp, where the king is sleeping among his troops. Diomedes kills the sleeping soldiers while Odysseus steals the king's team of horses. Diomedes thinks of killing more soldiers, but Athena alerts him that it is time to return to the Achaean camp.

The courage of Diomedes and Odysseus allows them both to reduce the number of their enemies and gain valuable plunder in the form of the horses. However, they still need the favor of Athena to escape unharmed.

Apollo sees the work of Athena and Diomedes, and immediately wakes up the Thracians. Diomedes and Odysseus flee from the scene, racing for the ships. The pair makes it back to the Achaean camp with the horses. Nestor praises the captured horses and Odysseus plays down the feat. The two men wash themselves and have a drink in praise of Athena.

Just as Athena is disposed toward helping the Achaeans, Apollo intervenes in favor of the Trojans and their allies. The night raid is a moment of heroism that allows the Achaeans to have hope after the difficult battling of the previous day.

BOOK 11

As dawn rises, Zeus sets the goddess Strife upon the Achaeans, encouraging them to fight. Agamemnon puts on his exquisite armor and shield. Zeus causes the sky to rain blood and fills the Achaeans with panic. The Trojans prepare for battle as well, driven forward by Hector. The armies clash with Strife hovering over them, and many men are killed in combat.

The goddess strife is a personification of Zeus' will, an avatar that hangs over the Achaean troops and makes their panic more tangible. Agamemnon's armor indicates his massive wealth and attention to the art of war.

The Achaeans begin to make progress against the Trojan lines. Agamemnon begins to kill many men, including two sons of Priam. Agamemnon is described as being like a lion, and kills the men who ask to be taken alive. The Trojans begin to flee under the pressure of Agamemnon's fury. Agamemnon kills more men, and the Achaeans reach the Trojan gates.

Agamemnon has previously displayed as a wealthy but somewhat indecisive king, but here it is established that he is a strong leader and a powerful warrior. He will be remembered as a hero along with the other Achaean champions.

Zeus sends his messenger Iris to Hector, telling the soldier to hold back and command his men until Agamemnon is wounded. After Agamemnon's injury, Hector will be given the strength to drive the Achaeans back to the ships. Hector hears the message and commands his men to withstand the Achaean onslaught.

Zeus closely controls the progress of battle, giving Hector precise instructions. Zeus seems to be in charge of fate itself, as he clearly knows beforehand that the Trojans will soon injure Agamemnon.

Agamemnon's charge continues, but soon Coon, a son of Antenor, slashes his arm. Agamemnon kills Coon, but soon realizes he is wounded. He mounts his chariot and drives back to the Achaean camp. Hector recognizes the sign of Agamemnon's wound and springs into action. He begins to drive the Achaeans back, killing many men as he advances.

As Coon injures Agamemnon, Zeus' will is fulfilled. Zeus has turned the tide of the war in Hector's favor, increasing his glory as the preeminent leader of the Trojan forces.

Odysseus and Diomedes stem the Trojan tide and prevent a complete disaster for the Achaeans. They turn and hold their ground, killing several Trojans. Hector charges them, and Diomedes throws his spear. It hits Hector's helmet and dazes him. Hector retreats from the front line.

This is one of several close brushes with death that Hector will face during the poem. Hector's injuries create suspense, but also are a presentiment of the more tragic death that awaits him.

As Diomedes is stripping the armor from a Trojan conquest, Paris shoots him in the foot with an arrow. Cursing Paris, Diomedes mounts his chariot and returns to camp. Odysseus, left alone, bravely fights the Trojans surrounding him, but he is eventually wounded in the ribs by the Trojan Socus. Several Achaeans come to his aid, and Odysseus barely escapes.

It is fitting that Paris often wields a bow, as he was first shown as a man reluctant to engage in direct combat with his rivals. Odysseus has a moment of unquestioned bravery, fending off Trojans without any support from his comrades.

Hector continues his onslaught, pushing the Achaeans back. The healer Machaon is wounded by Paris, causing distress among the Achaeans. Nestor carries Machaon back to the Achaean camp in his chariot. While the Achaeans tend to their injured, Great Ajax holds the line firm while slowly retreating.

For the Achaeans, the possible death of a healer is serious news, as so many soldiers are constantly near death on the battlefield. The ranks of Achaean heroes begin to dwindle, as an injured fighter is of no use to the Achaeans.

Achilles watches the course of battle from the top of his ship. Noticing Machaon's injury, he asks Patroclus to go to Nestor and inquire about the Achaean casualties, remarking that they must be desperate for his help. Patroclus reaches Nestor's tent, and Nestor tells Patroclus which Achaean captains have been wounded. Nestor tells a story from his youth, and beseeches Patroclus to convince Achilles to return to battle.

Despite his seeming indifference, Achilles is very interested in the progress of the war. It has a direct result for him: the worse Achaean defeat is, the more Achilles is honored as a necessary part of their army. However, it also seems that Achilles has genuine compassion for his comrades among the Achaeans.

Nestor recounts to Patroclus their departure from Phthia, for which Nestor was present, reminding Patroclus of his role as a guide and advisor to Achilles. He urges Patroclus to help convince Achilles to fight, but also offers an alternate plan. He suggests that Achilles could send Patroclus into battle in Achilles' armor, at least for long enough to cast fear into the Trojans and prevent their advance. Patroclus leaves Nestor. On the way back to Achilles' camp, Patroclus meets the wounded captain Eurypylus. Moved by his injury, Patroclus postpones his return to Achilles and treats Eurypylus' wound.

Nestor correctly realizes that Patroclus is an important advisor to Achilles, providing him with comfort and a levelheaded opinion. Achilles' pride is one piece of a fighter who is almost inhuman in his rage. Patroclus' will never be as great as Achilles, but Patroclus' friendship helps humanize the great warrior. Patroclus' compassion is displayed by his response to Eurypylus.

BOOK 12

The Trojans assail the Achaean fortifications. The fortress is destined to be destroyed, but only after the fall of Troy itself. Poseidon and Apollo will tear down the ramparts using the gathered fury of the area's rivers, setting the landscape aright.

The will of the gods easily outlasts the temporary wills or structures of men. Zeus, not the Trojans, controls the fate of the fortress, and he has decided that natural forces will destroy it in the future.

Hector leads the charge against the Achaean ramparts. His strength is described as being like a wild boar. His comrade Polydamas advises that the Trojans dismount from their chariots, as they will not be able to cross the ditch the Achaeans have dug. Hector agrees to the plan, and the Trojans attempt to storm the fortifications on foot.

Hector's strength is described using a familiar hunting metaphor, linking battle with the pastoral cycle of Greek life. Polydamas' advice signals that the Trojans will fight on foot, implying that there will be a great deal of killing at close quarters.

The Trojan ally Asius attempts to attack the Achaean gate in his chariot, in defiance of Hector's order. Two Achaean spearmen, Polypoetes and Leonteus, hold back the Trojan charge, hurling rocks at the advancing troops. Asius fails to break through the Achaean defense, and curses Zeus for his failure.

Asius' attempt to charge the Achaean fortifications in his chariot is a sign of bad strategy. Zeus has decided that the glory accorded for being the first to storm the ramparts will not belong to Asius.

As Hector and Polydamas try to storm the ramparts, they see an omen, an **eagle** holding a bloody serpent in its talons. The serpent bites the eagle, which releases it from its grip. Polydamas takes this as a sign that the Trojan assault will fail, but Hector ignores his advice, saying, "Fight for your country—that is the best, the only omen!" He drives the Trojans forward, and the Achaean wall seems to be barely holding.

The eagle and bloody serpent is an example of the unclear way in which the gods send signals of fate to men. Hector's refusal to yield to the omen is a sign of his both of his bravery and of his poor judgment. His position that men must fight for the country no matter no what is noble, but it will not save him from defeat.

Rocks from the ramparts are flying like snow, and the two Aeantes roam the walls, holding back each Trojan point of entry. The Lycians Sarpedon and Glaucus attack the ramparts, and the Achaean captain Menestheus calls to Great Ajax to help repulse their powerful advance. Ajax and Teucer kill several men but are unable to prevent Sarpedon from finally breaching the Achaean wall. Soon after, Hector shatters the Achaean gate with an enormous boulder. The Trojans swarm through the gateway.

The melee between many different Trojans and Achaeans demonstrates the constant tension of power between the two forces. Any individual man can make a contribution that might break through and turn the tide of the war.

BOOK 13

Zeus, pleased with the Trojan dominance, takes his eyes off of the battlefield, not suspecting than other gods might interfere with his plan. Poseidon notices his inattention and decides to assist the Achaeans. Taking the form of Calchas, Poseidon gives courage to the two Aeantes, telling them that if they hold fast, their men will follow suit. The Aeantes encourage the men around them, and Poseidon's voice reaches the entire Achaean army. Holding a tight formation, the Aeantes begin to push back Hector.

Through the preceding books, Zeus seems to have complete control over the war, making him master of the fates of men. Here it is shown that Zeus is not actually all-seeing, and that other gods can successfully interfere in his affairs. Fate itself is a force outside the control of any single god.

The battle rages on, and the Aeantes are locked in battle with Hector. Hector tries to kill Teucer, but misses and kills Amphimachus, Poseidon's grandson, instead. Poseidon is filled with rage and drives the Achaeans onward. Poseidon speaks to Idomeneus, urging him forward to revenge Amphimachus. Idomeneus and his aide Meriones rearm themselves and rejoin the battle on the Trojans' left flank.

Poseidon is another god with close ties to the war, both in the form of relatives and in his desire to give strength to the Achaean fighters. Poseidon bestows honor upon Idomeneus, who becomes another hero whose feats of strength are chronicled by the poet.

Homer briefly remarks on the clash of wills between Zeus and Poseidon. Zeus favors the Trojans in order to give Achilles more glory, but Poseidon is determined to secretly protect the Achaean forces. In battle, Idomeneus fulfills Poseidon's will, killing several Trojans. He meets Deiphobus in combat, one of Priam's finest sons. The two trade insults, and Deiphobus enlists the help of Aeneas against Idomeneus. Eventually Idomeneus wounds Deiphobus, and he is taken back to Troy. As the battle continues, Menelaus and Antilochus kill several Trojans.

Homer uses the gods as one way of explaining the mysterious or unexplainable. The dynamic between Zeus and Poseidon explains one part of the cosmos in terms of a sibling rivalry. It seems that one part of Poseidon's support for the Achaeans is a desire to contradict his older brother.

Back at the center of the battle, Hector is unaware of the wounds inflicted on the Trojans elsewhere. He drives his Trojans on, but the Aeantes stand fast in front of their troops, and the Trojans begin to lose their will to fight.

Hector and the Aeantes are constantly at the center of the battle, suggesting their central roles for their respective armies.

Polydamas rushes to Hector's side and asks him to listen to his good advice. He asks Hector to draw the troops back and regroup. Hector agrees, and moves to the other side of the line to give commands. He reaches the other end of the battle to find that many of his commanders have been killed or wounded. Hector finds Paris and asks him where Deiphobus and others have gone. Paris answers him and tells Hector that he is not a coward. Paris' fiery response raises Hector's spirits.

Although Hector had previously ignored Polydamas advice, Hector is ultimately a man of sound judgment. He is not too proud to admit that he is wrong, suggesting him as a type of contrast to the stubbornness of Achilles. He is a complex man, and even loves his brother Paris despite the troubles that he has brought upon the Trojans.

With new resolve and some fresh reinforcements, Hector once again pushes the Trojans forward. Great Ajax taunts Hector, and another **eagle** sweeps past the Achaeans, which the Achaeans take as a positive omen. Hector criticizes Ajax' "loose talk," and tells him that he will die with the rest of the Achaeans.

Hector's unflagging desire to defeat the Achaeans is a testament to his strength and his will to protect Troy. However, he cannot control the will of the gods, as Zeus is more than willing to demonstrate.

BOOK 14

In his tent, Nestor discusses the battle with the wounded Machaon. Nestor leaves his tent and immediately sees the carnage surrounding the Achaean camp. He meets the wounded captains Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes. Agamemnon, afraid that Hector's forces will prevail, suggests again that the Achaeans should sail for home. Odysseus harshly criticizes Agamemnon, telling him to keep quiet for fear that the soldiers might hear and lose their courage. Diomedes, though the youngest, asserts his place among the captains and advises that although they are injured, they can still help rouse the men into battle.

Agamemnon once again displays some questionable leadership among the Achaean captains. Agamemnon is the richest Achaean, but on the battlefield his opinion is not the most important. Diomedes, although younger than Agamemnon, gives the better advice because he stands by the courage of his convictions.

Poseidon comes to Agamemnon's side and reassures him that the Trojans will be turned back. On Olympus, Hera watches the actions of Poseidon and is pleased. She plots to help her brother by further diverting Zeus' attention away from Troy. Hera decides to dress in all of her finery and enchant Zeus with her beauty. She bathes, perfumes her body, and puts on her best robes.

Hera is another goddess who seeks to engineer plans behind Zeus back, demonstrating Zeus' fallibility. Hera realizes that love is sometimes capable of overcoming the most strict and warlike attitudes.

Hera goes to Aphrodite and asks her for a favor. Aphrodite agrees, and Hera tells her that she plans to reconcile two Titans who no longer make love. Deceived by Hera's lie, Aphrodite lends her a magical breastband that will make any man feel love and longing for its wearer. Hera takes the breastband from Aphrodite.

Aphrodite's breastband underscores the power of feminine charms, even in the context of battle. If Hera can cloud Zeus' judgment, her effort is as powerful as any decision made on the battlefield.

Hera flies to the dwelling places of the god Sleep. She asks the god to put Zeus to sleep for her, and Sleep is initially resistant. He recalls that he once performed the same task for Hera, and that Zeus nearly punished him severely for it. However, Hera promises Sleep one of the Graces as a wife, a young goddess that Sleep has longed for. Sleep agrees to put Zeus to sleep.

Sleep is another example of a god who is also a clear personification of a human action. The fact that Zeus can be put to sleep makes him more like a human, and again suggests that he does not have complete control of fate.

Hera flies to Mount Ida, where Zeus is enthroned. Sleep hides nearby in the form of a bird, waiting to perform his task. As soon as Zeus sees Hera, he lusts after her. Hera tells him the same lie about reconciling the two Titans, and Zeus tells her not to hurry, suggesting that they make love instead. Hera puts up a token resistance, but Zeus wraps them in a cloud of gold while they make love. Afterward, Sleep causes Zeus to slumber.

Hera is able to successfully execute her plan, indicating that other gods are capable of intervening in human affairs against the will of Zeus. Zeus is unable to resist Hera's charms, displaying the power sexuality to sway even the most powerful wills.

Sleep sends word to Poseidon that Zeus is asleep and that he may do as he pleases. Poseidon orders the Achaeans to take up larger shields and move forward. The Trojans and Achaeans collide once again, and Hector and Great Ajax engage each other. Hector cannot pierce Ajax's armor, but Ajax hurls an enormous boulder at Hector, bowling him over and nearly knocking him out. The Trojan captains surround Hector and drag him clear of the fighting. They splash water on his face and Hector vomits, overwhelmed by the blow.

With Zeus asleep, Poseidon is able to continue the Achaean resurgence. An Achaean victory runs against Zeus' plan but gives glory to the Achaean heroes. Hector is almost killed again by Ajax, demonstrating his mortality. The Trojans depend almost completely on Hector's strength: if he dies, there is no one to replace him.

The Aeantes continue their onslaught, and the two sides trade kills, taunting each other over the bodies that fall. Eventually, the strength of the Achaeans prevails, and the Trojans are routed back toward their city.

Poseidon's will is executed, and the Aeantes are especially honored, having driven Hector back from nearly capturing the ships.

BOOK 15

Zeus awakes from his slumber and sees the catastrophe created in his absence. Feeling pity for Hector, he curses Hera for her disobedience, promising to punish her. Hera, trying to escape blame, swears that she did not make Poseidon help the Achaeans. Zeus accepts her oaths and tells her they must reign in Poseidon. He asks Hera to summon Iris and Apollo. Iris will send a message to Poseidon, telling him to stand down. Apollo will rouse Hector and give him new strength to lead the Trojan charge. Zeus tells Hera that his plan is simply to bring Achilles back into battle, and that Troy will eventually fall to the Achaeans.

Although Zeus can be deceived, the deception is only temporary. He is still much more powerful than the other gods. However, Hera deceives Zeus again and is able to escape his wrath. She also learns the whole of Zeus' plan for the war, including the news of an intended Achaean victory. Now husband and wife work in tandem to bring Zeus' will to pass.

Hera agrees to Zeus' plan and returns to Olympus. She tells the god Themis about Zeus' unrelenting anger, and remarks to the gods that there is no use in defying Zeus. Ares, angered at the death of his son Ascalaphus, attempts to return to the battle, but Athena checks him with a stern warning. Hera summons Apollo and Iris and tells them to go to Zeus at once.

Ares is another god who loses a child in battle. His rage is heartfelt, but is still no use against Zeus' stern decree. It is possible that Ares' rage would actually assist Zeus here, but Athena shrewdly blocks him in order to protect the Achaeans.

Zeus gives Iris her message for Poseidon, telling him to back down. Zeus warns that he is too powerful for Poseidon, even though Poseidon "never shrinks from claiming to be my equal." Iris delivers the message. Poseidon is outraged at Zeus' arrogance, claiming his share of the world's power as Zeus' brother. Iris persuades him to temper his response, and Poseidon begrudgingly yields to Zeus.

Poseidon is subdued by the now awake Zeus, who is simply too strong for Poseidon to oppose. Zeus is determined to exercise his will over the battle. Poseidon may complain, but it is clear that he will not challenge his brother's dominance.

On Zeus' orders, Apollo goes to Hector and rouses him from his stupor. Hector says that he thought he was going to die, but Apollo reassures him and fills him with new strength. With Hector at the Trojan front again, the tide of battle turns. The Achaeans, seeing that Hector has returned intact from a near-fatal blow, recognize that Zeus is now against them. The Achaeans' best fighters hold their ground, allowing the other troops to retreat back to the ships.

Apollo intercedes once again to allow Hector to lead the Trojan forces. A mortal like Hector can never be sure when his time to die has come, but Apollo knows that he has a further place in the plans of the Gods. On the Achaean side, the soldiers recognize that the gods are against them (at least for the moment) but show heroism in the orderliness of their retreat.

Apollo assists the Trojans in battle, and Hector's forces begin to progress, killing many Achaeans. Apollo tears down the wall and fills up the Achaean trench, allowing the Trojan chariots to enter the Achaean camp. The Trojans advance to the Achaean ships, and the Achaeans fight them off from the tops of their decks.

With Apollo's assistance, Hector increases his fame by driving the Achaeans back to their ships. If the Trojans succeed in capturing or destroying the ships, then all of the Achaeans will be slaughtered, having no way to escape home.

Patroclus, still tending to Eurypylus, hears the Trojans storm the ramparts and rushes back to Achilles. The Trojans and Achaeans are locked in combat in front of the ships, and neither side is able to advance. Great Ajax and Hector once again encounter each other in battle. Teucer kills several Trojans, but Zeus breaks his bowstring just before he can take aim at Hector.

This scene illustrates Zeus' meticulous command of the war's progress, breaking Teucer's bowstring just in time to save Hector. Patroclus' path to Achilles also prepares Achilles' return to battle.

Hector notices Teucer's bow break and takes it as a sign from Zeus. He rallies his troops to push forward, just as Great Ajax urges his men to hold their ground in front of the ships. More men are killed on both sides, but Zeus plans a further Trojan breakthrough, hoping to lure Achilles back into battle. Ajax valiantly defends the line from the top of the ships, using a long pike, but Hector eventually reaches the stern of an Achaean ship, demanding that the Trojans bring fire to set it ablaze. Under Trojan pressure, even Ajax is forced to abandon the ship.

The Trojans are close to storming the Achaean ships, but it is clearly indicated that the Trojan advance is simply part of Zeus' larger plan to ultimately increase Achilles glory. The ships are both vessels and homes for the Achaeans, and their destruction would be the final blow in the war. Although Zeus has already planned the course of events, many heroes score magnificent kills in the fighting.

BOOK 16

Patroclus returns to Achilles' camp, crying with pity for the Achaean losses. Achilles tells him he has no reason to grieve, saying that Agamemnon's men are "repaid for their offenses." Patroclus replies that Achilles' anger is too stubborn. Patroclus asks if he can go into battle in Achilles' place, wearing Achilles' armor in order to demoralize the Trojans.

Achilles' pride and anger toward Agamemnon are extreme, and even the deaths of many of his comrades fails to move him. For Achilles, the preservation of his honor is the measuring stick for his life, and every Achaean injury makes his honor greater, as it will make it all the more impressive when he returns to battle and saves the day.

Achilles initially refuses Patroclus' request, but ultimately agrees, under the condition that Patroclus will return after he drives the Trojans back from the ships. Achilles remarks that Patroclus should not pursue the Trojans because any glory Patroclus receives beyond the ships might diminish Achilles own glory. Achilles is also concerned for Patroclus' safety, and worries that a god might appear on the battlefield to intervene.

Achilles does not realize that his acceptance of Patroclus' proposal helps execute Zeus' plan. The only thing that matches the intensity of Achilles care for his own glory is his love and concern for Patroclus.

Meanwhile, in the battle for the ships, Great Ajax is finally driven off the ship he is defending. He falls back and the Trojans succeed in setting the ship on fire. Patroclus sees the blaze and quickly puts on Achilles' armor. Achilles' chariot is yoked and Achilles stirs up the Myrmidons, his troops. Achilles prays to Zeus, asking him to fill Patroclus with courage and to bring him back safely from battle. Zeus hears his prayer, but decides only to honor half of it, deciding that Patroclus will not return from the battlefield.

The burning of the first Achaean ship is a sign that the Achaeans are in serious trouble. The ancient Greeks were a seafaring people, and made their wealth using their ships. Accordingly, their vessels were precious, and in the case of the Achaeans, their only way to return home. Patroclus, then, enters the battle at a pivotal moment, with the fate of the whole war hanging in the balance.

With Patroclus leading them, the Myrmidons swarm into battle, and are described as being like wasps that a boy has angered. The Trojans, seeing the fresh reinforcements and thinking that Achilles has returned, immediately begin to fear for their lives. Patroclus begins killing Trojans, and the Achaeans drive the Trojans back from the warships. Several Achaean captains kill their opponents.

The Myrmidons have not fought since Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon began, and the troops are eager to demonstrate their prowess. Patroclus proves that he is a very strong fighter, capable of winning glory without Achilles' help, even as he is disguised as Achilles.

The tide of battle turns further, and the Trojans' orderly retreat turns into a rout. Hector speeds away, but many Trojans are trapped in the Achaean trench. With Patroclus in the lead, the Achaeans slaughter the Trojans in the trench. Patroclus kills every Trojan he encounters. Patroclus faces Sarpedon, a Trojan ally and a son of Zeus, and eventually kills him. Zeus considers saving Sarpedon from Patroclus, but Hera scolds him, telling Zeus not to interfere in Sarpedon's mortal destiny. As a compromise, Zeus decides to send his body home intact after Patroclus kills him.

Patroclus string of kills is one of largest in the poem so far, and his fury is both an escalation of previous feats and a preparation for the even more miraculous feats of Achilles to come. Sarpedon's death illustrates Zeus' inability to master fate, as he is compelled to let his son die despite seeming to have the power to save him. However, his love for Sarpedon allows him to spare his body from desecration, and shows the importance to fathers and families of providing proper respect to the dead—a theme that will return upon the death of Hector.

Glaucus is filled with grief at the death of Sarpedon, his co-commander. Apollo fills Glaucus with strength. He exhorts Hector to remember his Trojan allies, and a battle begins over Sarpedon's body. The great Trojan and Achaean captains fight for the corpse, and several men are killed on both sides.

Glaucus' speech demonstrates the high passions experienced at the loss of a close friend in battle, foreshadowing Achilles feelings at the death of Patroclus. Sarpedon's corpse is a sign of honor: the Trojans look to save it, and the Achaeans look to disgrace it in front of the Trojans.

Zeus briefly deliberates whether to kill Patroclus now in reprisal for Sarpedon, or to let him gain more glory first. He decides on the latter, influencing Hector to call a full Trojan retreat. As the Trojans flee, Patroclus pursues them across the plain, violating his promise to Achilles to return after defending the ships. Patroclus kills more Trojans and nearly storms the gates of Troy. Apollo rebuffs Patroclus, telling him that it is not his fate to seize Troy.

Unbeknownst to Patroclus, his fate is in Zeus' hands. Despite his sorrow over Sarpedon's death Zeus decides that it is better to give Patroclus more glory, as it is more in line with Zeus' original plan. The more that Patroclus distinguishes himself in battle, the more tragic his death will be.

Apollo appears beside Hector in mortal form, and convinces him to attack Patroclus. Patroclus kills Hector's chariot driver, and Hector and Patroclus fight over the corpse. Fighting for the body, Patroclus charges the Trojans force repeatedly and kills many men, but on his fourth charge Apollo knocks Patroclus over from behind. Sent tumbling, Patroclus is speared by the young Trojan Euphorbus. Hector pounces on Patroclus and finishes the kill. He tells Patroclus that Achilles cannot save him now. With his last breath, Patroclus predicts to Hector that Achilles will kill him.

Patroclus reaches great heights on his rampage, nearly storming Troy, but his demise is less glamorous. Apollo pushes him from behind, and one of the youngest Trojans spears him. There is a sense that Patroclus has overstepped his limits, and that the battle must return to its natural order as decreed by Zeus.

BOOK 17

Menelaus, fighting nearby, watches the death of Patroclus. A battle begins over Patroclus' body. Euphorbus attempts to strip Patroclus' armor, but Menelaus kills him. Menelaus attempts to strip Euphorbus' armor, but Apollo rouses Hector to defend his body. Hector charges Menelaus. Menelaus, knowing that he cannot defend against Hector himself, searches for Great Ajax as the Trojans beat him back.

Patroclus' body becomes the greatest symbol of honor that the war has seen so far. Not only was his final effort in battle immense, but he is well known to be the companion of Achilles, and both sides recognize what the capture of his body would mean to the Achaean captain.

Menelaus finds Great Ajax and rouses him to come help defend Patroclus' body from desecration. Before they can arrive, Hector strips Achilles' armor from Patroclus' body. Menelaus and Ajax reach Patroclus and stand guard over the body. Glaucus criticizes Hector for leaving Sarpedon's body behind and accuses him of fearing Great Ajax. Hector dons Achilles' armor, and Zeus endows him with great strength. Hector rallies the Trojan troops, telling them that the man who takes Patroclus' body will receive half of his spoils from the war.

Menelaus is a strong fighter, but the Achaeans need Great Ajax, one of their very best heroes, to block the Trojan attack. It seems that Hector's actions are already oriented toward Achilles. Hector dons Achilles armor, a symbol of his glory in killing Patroclus, and offers a huge treasure for Patroclus' body. Hector fully realizes the body's significance to Achilles.

Trojan and Achaean champions converge over the body of Patroclus, fighting hard to remove his corpse from the battlefield. Hector and Great Ajax clash once again. The Achaeans begin to drive the Trojans back to their walls, but Apollo spurs Aeneas to regroup the Trojan forces. Despite Aeneas' efforts, the Achaeans hold fast over Patroclus. The battle over the body lasts all day.

The fighting between Hector and Great Ajax has become a pattern through the poem, pitting two of the strongest of each side's fighters against each other repeatedly. However, Ajax is always destined to be a lesser hero than Achilles—he fights Hector to a standstill but cannot kill him.

Achilles does not yet know that Patroclus has died. Achilles' horses, immortal gifts from the gods, sense the death and begin to weep. Zeus pities the horses and fills them with strength. They take their driver Automedon back into the thick of battle. Hector and Aeneas attack Automedon, attempting to take Achilles' horses. Automedon escapes Hector's attack, kills a Trojan, and finally the Aeantes arrive to give him support.

Achilles' horses are a sign of Achilles' close relationship with the gods, as he is nearly immortal himself. The battle between Automedon and Hector signals a moment of preparation for Achilles' appearance, as Achilles special horses must be rescued before Achilles can head into battle.

As the battle for Patroclus continues, Athena takes the form of Phoenix and breathes fresh strength into Menelaus. Revived, Menelaus kills a close friend of Hector. Apollo in turn gives strength to Hector. Zeus lets forth a thunderbolt that turns the tide of war in favor of the Trojans. The Achaeans begin to retreat.

This scene prefigures the events of Book 20, when the gods will be fully allowed to intervene in battle again. Until then, Athena cannot show her full force in battle, as Zeus has only ordered Apollo into the battle to support the Trojans.

Seeing that Zeus now favors the Trojans, Menelaus and Great Ajax devise a plan to pull Patroclus' body clear of the fighting. Menelaus finds Antilochus and asks him to relay the news of Patroclus' death to Achilles. Antilochus, struck dumb at the news, rushes back to the Achaean camp. Menelaus and Meriones pick up Patroclus' body while the Aeantes defend them from the Trojans. The Achaeans beat a retreat, with Hector and Aeneas in pursuit.

It is a great testament to Ajax' strength and heroism that he is able to fight off the Trojans while Menelaus and Meriones carry Patroclus. Carrying the body means that there are two fewer fighters to support Ajax. Over the course of the day, Ajax has proven he is one of the great Achaean heroes.

BOOK 18

Antilochus races to Achilles' camp to tell him of Patroclus' death. Achilles, sitting by ships, realizes the Achaeans are routed and fears the worst. Antilochus arrives and delivers the news. Achilles dissolves into grief, weeping uncontrollably and abasing himself in dirt. Antilochus stays near Achilles, fearing that Achilles will try to slash his own throat.

Achilles' expression of grief is extremely passionate, indicating the very close bond that Achilles shared with Patroclus. With his greatest comrade dead, Achilles nearly loses the will to live, and in throwing himself into the dirt suggests that he now regrets his part—and pride—in allowing Patroclus to die.

Achilles lets loose a "terrible, wrenching cry" that his mother Thetis hears. All of the sea nymphs of the ocean gather with Thetis and fly to Achilles. Thetis laments Achilles' approaching death, saying she can do nothing to prevent it. Thetis asks Achilles the reason for his sorrow, and Achilles tells her of the death of Patroclus. Achilles says he's lost the will to live other than to kill Hector.

Achilles, as the son of a goddess, always has access to his mother's attention. However, now his grief is so great that all the nymphs of the ocean come to attend Achilles. Achilles' grief is beginning to form itself into anger as he acknowledges that he must kill Hector.

Achilles mourns his previous inaction, and says that he is now ready to accept his fate by revenging himself on the Trojans. Thetis observes that Achilles no longer has any armor of his own, and tells him that she will go to the smith god Hephaestus. She tells Achilles to stay out of battle until the next dawn, when she will return with splendid new arms. The sea nymphs return home as Thetis speeds to Olympus.

Hector currently wears Achilles' armor, a gesture that implies that Hector now claims to be Achilles' equal in battle. The new god-made armor will become a symbol of Achilles' complete superiority over all other mortal soldiers. Earlier, Achilles refused to risk his life for mere treasure or for Agamemnon. But now, in getting revenge for Patroculus's death, he has found reason enough to face his fate—great glory and certain death.

On the battlefield, the Achaeans continue the retreat of Patroclus' body. The Aeantes keep defending and Hector keeps pressing them closely. Hector is close to seizing Patroclus' body. Iris informs Achilles that he must help defend Patroclus. Achilles tells Iris that he has no arms for war. Iris tells Achilles to simply show himself in order to strike fear into the Trojans. Achilles appears on the Achaean rampart, crowned by Athena with a golden cloud. Achilles gives his war cry and the Trojans panic. The Achaeans take the opportunity to finally pull Patroclus' body to safety. Battle ends for the day.

Achilles is so respected as a fighter that his mere presence instills terror into the hearts of his enemies. Athena further enhances his presence with a godlike quality. The fall of night creates a pause after the last 8 books of pure action, building tension for Achilles entry into battle when fighting resumes.

In the Trojan camp, Polydamas advises the Trojans to withdraw back into Troy's walls. He states that the Achaeans were difficult enough foes without Achilles, and now he is sure to return. Zeus causes Hector to reject Polydamas' advice, calling it cowardice, and commands the Trojans to camp outside the Trojan walls for another night. The Trojans will attack again in the morning.

Polydamas, sensing the tide of battle turning, gives the correct advice, but Zeus' intervention makes his good sense useless. Now it is Hector, influenced by the gods, who fails to read the signs correctly and whose pride prove fatal. With the Trojans still on the field of battle, Achilles will be able to use his full force, gaining great glory when he returns to battle.

At night, the Achaeans mourn Patroclus. Achilles begins to prepare Patroclus' body for burial, but says he will not bury him until he has slain Hector. Achilles again says he is doomed never to voyage home.

Achilles constantly demonstrates his grief for Patroclus, and his decision to keep Patroclus body unburied is his form of respect. Revenge must come first, and Achilles is willing to face certain death to achieve it. The other warriors face likely doom every time they fight. Achilles is different—his love for Patroclus and desire to take revenge upon Hector are so great that he chooses to act despite knowing it will lead to his death. This is truly heroic.

On Olympus, Thetis reaches the home of Hephaestus, which houses magnificent forges. Thetis is welcomed into the house, and Hephaestus remembers that Thetis cared for him for nine years after his fall from Olympus. Thetis speaks of her marriage to Achilles' mortal father, and explains the situation of Achilles' lack of armor. Hephaestus gladly agrees to make a new set of armor greater than any other owned by a man.

The fact that Achilles' mother is a goddess gives him special privileges that no ordinary mortal could hope to expect, and Thetis is completely dedicated to giving Achilles honor in his short life. Achilles' new armor will demonstrate his complete dominance in battle.

Hephaestus sets to work. He forges the famous **shield of Achilles** that contains on it a picture of the entire world. It includes the sea, the sky, and the world of men in all its different forms. The shield has two cities of men, one at peace and one at war, and has scenes of marriage, harvest, shepherding, and battle. The depth of detail is staggering. Hephaestus also forges a helmet and breastplate. When his work his finished, he lays the armor at Thetis' feet.

Achilles' shield is a symbol of the interconnected nature of war and peace in the world of ancient Greece. Battle, just like harvest or marriage, is a staple of any citizen's life. With the entire world represented on Achilles' shield, Achilles is singled out as one of the foremost representatives of humanity, unique in his strength. In his shield, he literally carries the world, just as he carries the success of the Achaeans.

BOOK 19

As dawn rises, Thetis arrives at Achilles' camp with the new armor. Achilles is still in deep mourning, lying face down beside Patroclus' body. The armor shines so brightly that the Myrmidons are afraid to look at it. Achilles thanks his mother.

The armor that Thetis brings to Achilles is not a part of the mortal world, but rather a piece of the supernatural. Only Achilles is fit to wear it.

Achilles calls an assembly of the Achaean troops. Agamemnon comes to the meeting, and Achilles says the time has come to reconcile. Agamemnon agrees, but notes that he is not to blame, indicating that Zeus's daughter Atë (Ruin) had blinded his judgment when he chose to quarrel with Achilles. Agamemnon then tells the story of Ruin, who was cast out of Olympus for foiling Zeus' plans for Hercules. Agamemnon also tells Achilles that he will still give him the gifts he promised, including the return of Briseis. Achilles, knowing his time is short, indifferently accepts.

Achilles has decided to return to battle, and in doing so he has sealed his fate. He can no longer think of returning to his homeland in order to live a long and unremarkable life, or about spoils of war. Knowing that he will die, the ordinary aspects of Achaean life have lost their value, especially the treasure that Agamemnon had promised Achilles. It's as if he exists on a different, more heroic, plane than the other Achaeans. Agamemnon is still trying to save face, still being a politician. Achilles is focused purely on revenge.

Achilles urges the Achaean captains to call their troops to battle as quickly as possible. Odysseus replies that the men must eat first, so as to fortify themselves for battle. Agamemnon agrees, but Achilles says he has no taste for food until he satisfies himself in combat. Odysseus replies that food is for the living, and convinces Achilles to let the men eat. The captains sacrifice to Zeus and eat.

Achilles' refusal to eat is a both a sign of his respect for Patroclus and an indication of his extraordinary eagerness to begin his killing. Odysseus' statement is true, but Achilles almost has no need any longer for the necessities of men—his choice to fight has made him, essentially, one of the dead.

Agamemnon's gifts are brought to Achilles' camp. Briseis, returned to Achilles, sees that Patroclus has died and mourns over his body. She says that he was always very kind. Achilles' comrades beseech him to eat something, but Achilles refuses, overfilled with grief. Achilles addresses Patroclus with a speech of mourning. Zeus, filled with pity, sends Athena to nourish Achilles with the food of the gods without him noticing.

The appearance of Briseis brings the plot of Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon full circle. Briseis' lament is a sign of how much has changed since the initial argument of the captains. Now that Patroclus is dead, Briseis' significance has diminished, as Achilles' grief begins to elevate him above the realm of mortal things.

All the Achaeans prepare for battle. Achilles arms himself, donning the magnificent armor forged by Hephaestus. Achilles' team of horses is readied. As Achilles mounts his chariot, Hera gives voice to his horse Roan Beauty. The horse tells Achilles that he will help save Achilles' life today, but that the day of his death is soon approaching. Achilles is angered, saying that he does not need to be reminded of his fate. Achilles drives out to battle.

As Achilles' prepares for battle, the sense of determined fate is deeply underscored. Even Achilles' horses let him know that he must die soon, and Achilles seems tired of hearing about his future demise. Words no longer have any use for him: only action remains.

BOOK 20

As the Achaeans prepare for battle, Zeus summons the gods to a council. Zeus tells the assembled gods that they may return to the battlefield and help the sides they support. He remarks that if the gods do not intervene, Achilles may overpower the Trojans and sack the city. The gods launch themselves onto the battlefield, taking their appropriate sides.

Zeus' reason for allowing the gods to intervene seems peculiar. Zeus has shown himself more than capable of controlling the events that take place on the battlefield. Yet Zeus' decree helps emphasize just how powerful the angered Achilles will be, and provides a climax of all the gods in strife alongside the fiercest fighting among the mortals.

Battle breaks out, and Achilles searches everywhere for Hector. Apollo, taking the form of the Trojan Lycaon, urges Aeneas to attack Achilles. Aeneas is resistant, remembering an earlier defeat at Achilles' hands, but eventually agrees.

Aeneas, like Achilles, has a mother for a goddess, and he is naturally paired with Achilles as a combatant. Yet he fears to face Achilles. Achilles goes to fight knowing he will die. Aeneas still wants to live.

Hera, seeing Aeneas approach Achilles, asks Athena and Poseidon to help her give support to the Achaeans. Poseidon replies that their side is much stronger, and that it would be better if the gods watched the battle from the sidelines. The gods take seats overlooking the battle, each contingent on opposite sides.

Although the gods are now allowed to intervene in battle, they prefer to watch until they have to take action. For the immortals, the death of men is almost like a spectator sport.

Aeneas and Achilles prepare to fight. Achilles taunts Aeneas, recalling the time when Aeneas ran from his fury. Aeneas replies that Achilles cannot frighten him and recites to him the lineage of Troy. The two battle and Achilles immediately overpowers Aeneas. Achilles nearly kills him, but Poseidon pities Aeneas and his lineage. Against the wishes of Hera and Athena he rescues Aeneas, lifting him away from Achilles and placing him elsewhere on the battlefield.

Although Apollo urges Aeneas to fight Achilles, he cannot hope to match Achilles now, filled with grief as he is. In some sense, the heroism of Aeneas' fathers saves him, as Poseidon decides that it would be a pity for Achilles to snuff out the noble line of Troy. Aeneas' survival helps their memory live on. (And Aeneas will go on to be the central character of the Aeneid, in which he founds the civilization that will become the Roman Empire, making the Trojan line live on in history.)

Achilles and Hector both marshal their men forward. Apollo speaks to Hector, instructing him not to fight Achilles in front of the ranks, as Achilles will surely kill him. Achilles kills several Trojans, including Polydorus, Hector's brother. Incensed by his brother's death, Hector charges Achilles, who welcomes his approach. Achilles is too strong for Hector, and Apollo is forced to save him, shielding the Trojan as Achilles charges him repeatedly. Hector is whisked away by Apollo.

This brief meeting between Achilles and Hector foreshadows the lengthier battle between the two in Book 22. In this brief preview, it becomes clear that Hector is no match for Achilles, and the intervention of Apollo is necessary to keep battle going.

Achilles curses Hector for escaping, and blames Apollo for intervening. Achilles continues on his murderous warpath, "like inhuman fire raging." He kills several Trojans, letting no man be taken alive. No Trojan can stand before Achilles' "invincible arms."

Achilles speaks his mind freely, being more familiar at speaking with the gods than most mortals. His exceptional status is mirrored in combat, where his feats surpass any other man.

BOOK 21

Achilles pursues the Trojans to the ford of the river Xanthus. The Trojan force has split in half: one group runs back to Troy, while the other group tries to cross the river to escape Achilles. The Trojans are described as being like locusts fleeing a fire. Achilles rushes into the water, slaughtering many Trojans in the river. Achilles grows so tired from killing Trojans that he takes twelve young Trojans alive.

The river provides a perfect setting for Achilles' feats of heroism, slowing the movement of the Trojans as Achilles attacks. Furthermore, the river's flow is dynamic, mirroring the way in which Achilles swiftly dispatches his enemies.

Achilles also comes across Priam's son Lycaon, who Achilles had previously captured and sold into slavery. Lycaon managed to return back to Troy, and had only been home for twelve days before running into Achilles again. Achilles, with irony, calls Lycaon's return from slavery a miracle. Lycaon begs for his life again, but Achilles has no mercy, saying, "Come, friend, you too must die. Why moan about it so?" Achilles kills Lycaon.

The story of Lycaon's return and death underscores uncertainty of death. Lycaon's return from slavery was a product of great effort and good fortune, turned suddenly into bad. Achilles' statement that all men must die also refers to himself. Earlier he took Lycaon alive, but now, knowing he himself must also die, Achilles is different and has no mercy for anyone.

Achilles continues killing Trojans in the river, clogging the stream with blood and bodies. Xanthus, the god of the river, takes the form of a man and asks Achilles to stop killing Trojans in the river. Achilles agrees to stop fighting in the river, but not to stop killing Trojans. Xanthus, angered by Achilles' resistance, calls on Apollo for help. Achilles is enraged by Xanthus' interference and plunges into the river to kill more Trojans.

Xanthus protest to Achilles is a sign of Achilles' immense power: Achilles has killed so many men that his actions are beginning to upset the natural order of things as represented by the river. The fact that Achilles disobeys a god also heightens the sense of Achilles' glory, as he seems to perform more like an equal of the gods than like a mortal man.

Xanthus flings the corpses out of his river while saving the Trojans still living. Achilles begins to fight the river, and Xanthus creates enormous waves to drown Achilles. Achilles runs ever higher up the embankment, trying to escape the river, but Xanthus nearly pulls him down to his death.

Although Achilles' strength is nearly supernatural, it is still not enough to defeat an immortal god. Achilles may be nearly immortal, but he is still ultimately a subject to the forces of nature.

Achilles laments that if the river kills him, he will never gain the honor he desires. Poseidon and Athena reassure Achilles. They tell him that he must keep fighting until he kills Hector, and that afterward he must return to the ships. Xanthus calls to the river Simois to help him drown Achilles, but Hera intervenes, calling her son Hephaestus to battle the river with his fire. Under his blaze, the river boils until Xanthus promises to submit.

Achilles is obsessed with gaining as much glory as he can in the day's battle, but Poseidon and Athena demarcate the extent of Achilles' success. Achilles' fame has limits: he is not destined to overpower the city of Troy itself. In addition, he still needs the help of Hephaestus to counter Xanthus.

The gods begin to fight among themselves. Ares charges Athena, but Athena quickly beats down his challenge, striking him with a stone. Athena then attacks Aphrodite, who retreats immediately alongside Ares. Poseidon tries to goad Apollo into battle, but Apollo refuses to fight, insisting that he will not fight over mortals. Apollo's sister Artemis calls him a coward, and Hera, overhearing Artemis' taunt, boxes the goddess' ears. Artemis and her mother Leto withdraw from the battle, and Artemis complains to Zeus about her harsh treatment from Hera.

The engagement of all the gods in battle demonstrates that the poem is moving toward its climax. All the gods are arrayed against one another, making the battle a conflict both on earth and in the heavens. Notice how Aphrodite flees from battle much as Paris does; and it is Aphrodite and Paris who set this war in motion.

Priam watches the carnage wrought by Achilles from the gates of Troy. He orders that the Trojan gates be opened in order let the routed troops back into the city. Apollo looks to distract Achilles long enough to allow the Trojans to escape. Apollo puts courage into the heart of the Trojan prince Agenor. Agenor stands against Achilles but cannot pierce his godly armor. When Achilles attacks, Apollo lifts Agenor to safety and takes his place. He runs from Achilles, creating a decoy that allows other Trojans to escape.

Apollo's distraction is necessary to prevent Achilles from killing many more Trojans. Apollo can only give a limited amount of help to the Trojans, as he cannot directly disobey Zeus' plan to give glory to Achilles. However, he does his best to thwart Achilles, attempting to diminish the magnitude of his feats on the battlefield.

BOOK 22

Achilles chases the man he believes to be Agenor, but soon Apollo reveals himself to Achilles, taunting him for chasing a god. Achilles is angered that Apollo has prevented him from gaining more glory, and begins running toward the walls of Troy. Hector is the only Trojan standing outside the city's walls, waiting to fight Achilles to the death.

By running from Achilles, Apollo prolongs his distraction, saving more Trojan lives. Both Hector and Achilles are looking for glory, but in distinctly different ways. Achilles' honor is measured by the size of his slaughter, Hectors' by his final ability to protect his city.

Priam sees Achilles coming and implores Hector to come inside the city walls. He asks Hector to pity him, with all the losses he has suffered, and suggests that a hero's death is much greater than dying as an old man.

Although Priam desperately wishes to save his son, he also extols the lives of heroes. To die an old man means that one was not daring enough in combat.

Hector waits for Achilles as he runs across the plain. He is ashamed of his decision to allow the Trojans to camp outside the city walls. He wonders if he can negotiate with Achilles, but soon realizes that Achilles' anger is unshakable. He resolves to fight, but as Achilles approaches, he loses his nerve and runs away. Achilles begins to chase Hector, and they run around the walls of Troy three times. Zeus, filled with pity for Hector, wonders if she should rescue him, but Athena tells him that Hector is fated to die. Zeus relents.

Hector is the more human and relatable character, feeling motivated to try to make amends (despite near certainty he will fail) to make up for the harm he has done to his people. Yet such complicated motivation cannot stand up to the pure, heroic anger of Achilles. It is interesting that Zeus considers deviating from his plan, which was conceived in the first book of the poem. It is not clear if Zeus has the power to change the plan but Athena dissuades him from doing so, or if Athena is reminding Zeus that Hector's fate is actually outside Zeus's control. Either way, Zeus's concern for Hector does highlight Hector's own heroism, even as that heroism fails in the face of Achilles' fury. Hector can't face near-certain death, and runs. Achilles accepts his certain death.

On their fourth circuit of Troy, Achilles cannot gain on Hector, but Hector cannot escape from Achilles' speed. Zeus takes up his scales and tips the balance against Hector, sentencing Hector to death. Athena appears behind Achilles, telling him she will persuade Hector to fight. The goddess appears beside Hector in the form of Deiphobus, telling him that the two of them together can face Achilles. Hector, moved that his brother would leave the city to join him, agrees to the plan. Hector turns to face Achilles.

With the tipping of the scales, Hector's fate is no longer in the slightest doubt. Achilles will receive the glory of killing the greatest of the Trojan fighters. The trick Athena plays on Hector is one of the final examples of a godly intervention in battle, but the trick is not portrayed as underhanded. It is simply the effective action of a goddess.

Hector speaks to Achilles, asking that they both swear to honor each other's bodies, no matter the outcome of their fight. Achilles rejects the offer. Achilles hurls his spear at Hector and misses, but Athena passes the weapon back to Achilles. Hector's spear hits **Achilles' shield** but cannot pierce it. Hector turns to Deiphobus but cannot find him. He soon realizes that the apparition was a trick of the gods, and that his fate is sealed.

Hector tries to appeal to Achilles sense of decency, but Achilles is bent on shaming Hector as a revenge for the death of Patroclus. The gods, attempting to ensure their plan, are completely on Achilles' side, giving him every possible advantage.

Hector and Achilles charge one another, and Achilles drives his spear into the weak spot at Hector's neck. With his dying words, Hector asks for his body to be returned to Troy, but Achilles refuses, boasting over Hector's body. He tells Hector that the dogs will feed on him. The other Achaeans gather over Hector's body and gleefully stab his corpse.

Hector is wearing Achilles old armor, and the fact that Achilles is able to pierce his old gear is a testament to Achilles' elevated prowess since the death of Patroclus. After Hector dies, the Achaeans insist on shaming his body, in effect shaming not just Hector but his entire family to whom his body is sacred.

Achilles briefly considers further battle, but soon realizes he must return to the Achaean camp to bury the body of Patroclus. Triumphant, Achilles ties Hector's body to the back of his chariot and drags him through the dust, defiling his body.

Having revenged himself on Hector, Achilles now realizes that the most important thing to do is to pay due respect to the remains of his beloved comrade. This stands in stark contrast to both Patroclus and Hector, both of whom made prideful decisions. Achilles, despite his desire for glory, sets aside such desire to fulfill the promise he made to give honor to Patroclus, showing that his love for Patroclus is greater even than his love of glory.

Priam and Hecuba grieve for Hector, and Priam calls his death the most heartbreaking loss of the war. Hector's wife Andromache does not yet know of Hector's death, as no messenger is brave enough to bring her the news. Hearing the wailing outside her chambers, Andromache fears the worst and rushes out to the gates. She is in time to see her husband being dragged through the dirt by Achilles. She collapses in sorrow, and laments that Astyanax will grow up as an orphan.

Hector's death is a presentiment of the fall of Troy, as is the prediction of Astyanax's orphaning. Andromache's delayed response is a device that emphasizes the shock of Hector's death, giving the reader the sense of surprise for something that he or she had known was coming for a long time.

BOOK 23

The Achaean troops return to camp. Achilles organizes an elaborate funeral for Patroclus, and the Myrmidons grieve for their losses. Hector is left desecrated in the dust. The men eat a funeral feast, but Achilles will not wash the blood off of his body until Patroclus' burial is finished.

Achilles' grief for Patroclus is massive, and he provides multiple signs of his devotion and sense of loss. Achilles feels the loss of both a true comrade in arms and an incredibly close companion.

Exhausted from combat and from grief, Achilles falls asleep. In the night, the ghost of Patroclus appears before Achilles, asking him to complete the funeral so that Patroclus may pass into the world of the dead. Patroclus asks for his bones to be buried together with Achilles', so that they may never be separated. Achilles agrees, but when he tries to embrace Patroclus he cannot touch the ghost.

The appearance of Patroclus' ghost demonstrates the unique bond between Patroclus and Achilles. The connection is so strong that Patroclus will return from the dead to speak to him. Their joint burial also suggests the strength of their remarkable bond. Patroclus's request also emphasizes the importance of a proper burial, as only it allows a soul's passage to the afterlife—this is what is being denied to Hector.

The next day, an Achaean force led by Meriones cuts timber for Patroclus' funeral pyre. The men prepare for the funeral, putting on their arms and building Patroclus' pyre. A massive sacrifice is made to the gods, including the twelve Trojans that Achilles took captive the previous day. At first Patroclus' pyre does not burn, but Achilles prays to the gods of the west and north wind. Iris delivers Achilles' prayer, and soon the pyre is set ablaze. The next day, Patroclus' bones are collected and placed in an urn, and the Achaeans build him a burial mound. Achilles asks to be buried in the same tomb.

With the construction of Patroclus' pyre, the mourning for Patroclus begins to draw to a close. Achilles' sacrifice, including twelve Trojans, is an effort to show the magnitude of his sorrow. At moments, Achilles seems nearly like a god, as when Iris takes his message for him to the gods of the wind, who immediately comply with his wishes. Yet Achilles glory is connected not to immortality but a complete acceptance of his own death, demonstrated again by his request to be buried in the same tomb. Achilles knows he will dies not just soon, but during the war.

Achilles oversees a series of funeral games to celebrate the memory of Patroclus. The first event is the chariot race, and Achilles lays out rich prizes for the victors. Eumelus, Diomedes, Menelaus, Antilochus, and Meriones participate in the race. Apollo, still angry with Diomedes, knocks his whip out of his hand, but Athena gives it back to him. Eumelus is the most famous driver, but Athena breaks his yoke, allowing Diomedes to take the lead. The drivers approach the race's turn.

The funeral games mark the end of the period of grieving for Patroclus. These events restore order to the Achaean army, which had been held in the suspension of Achilles' sorrow. The games provide a peacetime-like lull after the strife of Patroclus' death, though of course the gods still meddle.

Antilochus, despite having slower horses, outmaneuvers Menelaus on the narrow track. As the racers turn back to the finish line, Idomeneus is the first to see Diomedes coming, though Little Ajax argues with him, claiming Eumelus is in first. Achilles calms the quarreling captains. Diomedes wins the race, followed by Antilochus and Menelaus. Achilles gives Eumelus a prize for his bad luck, and Menelaus makes Antilochus swear that he did commit a foul during the race. Antilochus says he will not swear, but Menelaus lets him have his prize anyway.

During the games, Achilles seems more like the king than Agamemnon. Achilles distributes prizes and mediates disputes, taking his place as the foremost of all the Achaeans.

The next event is the boxing match. Achilles lays out more prizes for the winners. The warrior Epeus is the victor, a specialist in boxing. The next event is wrestling, where Great Ajax' strength is pitted against Odysseus knowledge of holds. Neither man is able to gain an advantage, so Achilles tells them to share the prizes.

Although the events of the games have their roots in warfare, they seem thoroughly domesticated. For instance, unlike the wrestling match between Odysseus and Ajax, there are no ties on the battlefield.

The next event is the footrace, where Odysseus, Little Ajax, and Antilochus are the participants. Ajax is winning, but Athena helps Odysseus by causing Ajax to slip and fall. Ajax finishes second and Antilochus last. In the next event, the men duel in full armor. Great Ajax and Diomedes are the two chosen champions. They fight, but are separated before one man can injure the other. Achilles declares Diomedes the winner.

Even in a sporting event such as footrace, the gods still intervene in the lives of mortals. The mock combat provides another peacetime mirror of war, and as with the wrestling match, one does not simply a declare a winner on the battlefield.

Next, the men compete to throw a lump of iron. The captain Polypoetes wins the competition. Next, the men compete in archery, attempting to shoot at a dove tied to a cord. Meriones wins the competition, and Teucer comes in second because he did not pray to Apollo. Last, the men begin the spear throwing competition. Achilles intercedes, telling Agamemnon that he is the greatest spearmen by far. Agamemnon is automatically awarded first prize.

The archery competition is another example of the importance of respecting the gods, no matter how small the task seems to be. In the case of the spear throwing contest, Achilles restores order to the games and the army, giving his due deference to Agamemnon.

BOOK 24

The funeral games end, but Achilles continues to be consumed by grief for Patroclus. Flooded with memories, he repeatedly uses his chariot to drag Hector's body around Patroclus' tomb. Apollo, pitying Hector, protects his body from harm and decay.

Although Patroclus has been buried, Achilles is consumed by Patroclus' death. Achilles knows that his time short, and that Patroclus' death is one of the last meaningful events in his life.

The gods feel sorry for Hector and desire to rescue his body from Achilles. They ask the god Hermes to steal the body away, but Hera, bent on shaming the Trojans, will not allow it because of her hate of all Trojans resulting from the Judgment of Paris, when Paris favored Aphrodite's beauty over that of Athena and Hera, eventually leading to the conflict with the Achaeans.

In the last book of the poem, Homer mentions for the first time the incident that began the war. Homer never describes the scene of the Judgment, but indicates that Paris' choice led to Hera's anger at this precise moment.

Twelve days after Hector's death, Apollo addresses the gods. He tells them that Hector always respected the gods, and that Achilles has no decency for desecrating his body. Hera counters him, stating that Achilles is the son of a god, and that he and Hector cannot be equals. Zeus agrees with Hera, but also indicates that the gods loved Hector dearly. He sends Iris to call Thetis to Olympus. When she arrives, Zeus instructs her to go to Achilles and to tell him to give Hector's body back to Priam. Priam will give Achilles a ransom as payment.

Apollo's plea to the gods is one of decency: Hector always respected the gods, so the gods should ensure his body is respected in turn. Hera's response, though, points to a different way of looking at things. as the son of a goddess, Achilles is simply different than Hector, and is judged by a different set of standards. Zeus agrees with both sides, essentially, and be sending a messenger leaves the choice up to Achilles.

Thetis flies to Achilles side to comfort him. Achilles is still choked with sorrow. Thetis asks Achilles how long he will grieve, and then tells him of Zeus' decree to release Hector's body. Achilles agrees, saying that he will not resist the will of the gods.

Achilles is filled with anguish, but he overcomes that grief to show his respect to the gods.

Zeus sends Iris to Troy, letting Priam know that he must travel alone to the Achaean ships to ransom Hector's body. He is told that Achilles will not kill him. Priam orders that a wagon be readied with magnificent treasure. Hecuba attempts to convince him that the journey is foolhardy, but Priam is determined to take back Hector's body. Hecuba asks Priam to pray for a sign from Zeus first, and Priam agrees. Zeus sends an **eagle** to reassure them. Priam sets out in his wagon, accompanied by his old driver.

The gods decide to send Priam alone to ransom the body of Hector, creating a situation where the wisest of Trojans will meet with the strongest of the Achaeans, where the father of the slain will meet with the vengeful slayer. Priam is depicted as very vulnerable, and his vulnerability is emblematic of Troy's weakness after the death of Hector.

Zeus tells Hermes to go to Troy and ensure Priam's safe travel. Hermes appears to Priam in the form of a stranger, saying that Priam reminds him of his father. He offers to help Priam. Priam grows suspicious and asks whom the stranger is. Hermes replies that he is an aide of Achilles, and lets Priam know that Hector's body is still intact. Hermes guides Priam's wagon through Achilles' gate and puts the sentries to sleep. He then reveals to Priam that he is a god sent to help him.

Hermes is the god who acts as a guide to heroes, and his presence is necessary in order to sneak Priam into Achilles' camp undetected. Without Hermes' help, Priam would surely be caught and killed by the Achaean forces. Hermes comment about Priam reminding him of his father emphasizes again that Priam is a father, with a father's great love for his dead son.

Priam enters Achilles' lodge and kneels, kissing Achilles' hand. He asks for mercy, and beseeches Achilles to remember his own father. Achilles is moved by Priam's words and courage. The two men weep for their losses in the war. Achilles tells Priam that his father Peleus will never see him again. Achilles asks Priam to sit but Priam refuses, asking to ransom the body immediately. Achilles asks Priam not to anger him, as he might kill him if his temper flares.

As Priam has been led secretly into Achilles' camp, he can speak with Achilles alone without the interference of politics. When Achilles sees his father in Priam, they both realize that they have borne losses. It is the first moment of compassion that Achilles has shown for another living person since the death of Patroclus. Achilles has accepted his own death, but in Priam's grief for Hector he can see how his own death will affect his father, and it moves him in a way he hadn't been since making his choice to act.

Achilles fetches Hector's body for Priam and apologizes to Patroclus for letting the body go. Achilles asks Priam to dine with him, reminding him that even the sorrowful must eat. They eat together, looking each other over, and Priam asks to be put to bed. Achilles tells Priam to sleep outside so that he will not be discovered. Finally, Priam asks for eleven days of truce to mourn and bury Hector, to which Achilles agrees.

The meal between Achilles and Priam is a moment of silent unity as the two men share in each other's grief. However, the moment is only temporary, and both men know that they will soon return to the state of war. The truce for Hector's burial mirrors the burial of Patroclus.

Hermes wakes Priam from his sleep, advising him to leave the Achaean camp before he is discovered and killed. Priam, terrified, drives his wagon out of the camp and is not seen. Priam returns to Troy and the Trojans see Hector's body borne on Priam's wagon. The city is plunged into grief. Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen all cry out in grief for the loss of Hector, praising him for his bravery and kindness. The eleven days of lamentation pass, and Hector is finally buried by the Trojans.

Although the Iliad *begins by outlining its subject as the wrath of Achilles, the poem ends with the burial of Hector. Hector is a different kind of hero than Achilles, less godlike but more connected to the people around him. All the people of Troy grieve his loss, and the three Trojan women testify to his humane qualities.*